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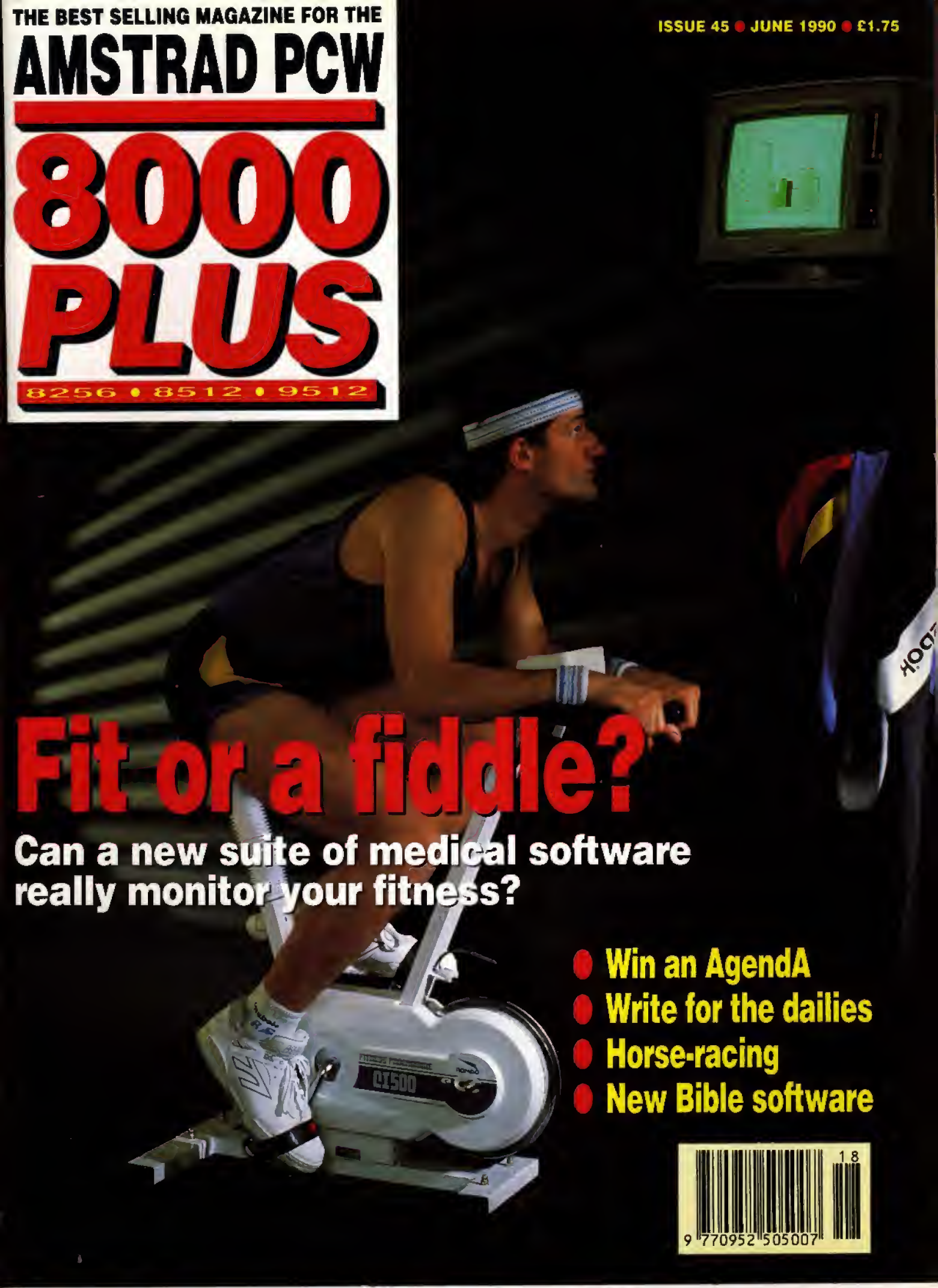

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So what's new?

There's a proliferation of new software reviews in this month's issue. Some of them fill an obviously awaiting gap in the market. Take the professionally-produced MD Cleartext, for example, which provides all users of the highly successful MicroDesign DTP package with a series of usable, attractive fonts.

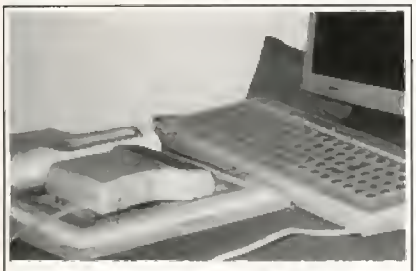
Then there's the rather intriguing suite of health programs featured on this month's front cover. Can your PCW really keep you on the righteous path of slim-line contours and healthy living? We couldn't wait to put North Micro Laboratories' offerings through their paces. But while they formed, for the most part, a workable suite of programs containing, or so we thought, something of interest for just about everyone, their prices proved to be way out of the range of universal appeal. Read our review of it, starting on page 46, to make your own mind up.

This month also saw the old and the new coming together to form one of the most successful alliances we've ever seen: the New Testament on three inch disc, complete with concordance. We know from the mailbag that there's quite a lot of you out there involved in Bible-study of one kind or another, so we greeted this arrrival with open arms. It was definitely worth the wait. Read pages 24 and 25 for a review of a program that, quite unexpectedly, stole the show. You might notice one or two changes in this month's magazine: there's an extra page of Tipoff's, for a start, as well as a new typeface and page layout. Although your favourite PCW magazine has taken on a fresher, more stylish look for the future, we hope that we've managed to retain all your old design favourites. Anyway, we like it – and hope that you do too.

Hands up for the PCW

Numbered are the days when you have to spend hundreds of pounds on a computer and the equipment to scan in static images such as photographs, cartoons or maps from the page to the screen. Creative Technology, not content with producing excellent DTP software such as Micro Design, have just completed the prototype of their new hand-scanner for the PCW.

Already on the market is Master Scan from Database, but the major drawback with this system is that it fits to the head of the PCW's dot matrix printer. This not only restricts the size of the scanned image, it also means that 9512 owners, and 8000 owners who have changed their printers for flashier 9 and 24 pin versions are forced to send off pictures for digitising. Nick Holmes of Creative Technology explained how it works, "We're using the scanner here with a development version of MicroDesign which, like its predecessors, has different sections to the program. We've added a special scanning section to this one.". The advent of a genuine handheld scanning device not to mention a new version of Micro Design, can only breathe yenew life into desktop publishing with the PCW.



The revolutionary hand-scanner for the PCW comes from the Micro Design stable, read on ...

Before the scan takes place, several adjustments can be made. Width varies from 200 to 400 dpi (dots per inch). "Although 300 is suitable for most purposes,", commented Nick, "the tonal settings can also be altered. When everything is ready, you just have to press a button on the scanner and you're off. You can scan anything on the page – mixing text in with graphics".

The program will tell you if you are going too fast, as well as stopping the scan if you go off the page. "Also, any 'rubbish' which comes with a scanned image can be removed with the other MicroDesign tools. The development version of MicroDesign has an improved driver for the PCW printer, so an image can be scanned and printed in the least possible time.". The scanner can also rotate text, "so all those people who said that Micro Design couldn't do a continuous rotate now have no excuses!", said Nick.

Creative Technology hope that the scanner will be ready for commercial release at the end of the summer. "This is a new departure for us, in that for the first time, we are dependent on outside parties to keep us on schedule," said the company. "We have to buy the scanner heads, and contract out the manufacture of the interfaces, so it could take some time.".

Programmer Simon Hargreaves will be talking to SCA, of RAMpack fame, about production of the scanner. "We are hoping to be in production by the end of July." he told us. And the cost of the new product? "It could be anything between £160-£200 – it could even be more – we haven't finalised the realistic retail price.", added Nick. The good news for 8000 Plus readers is that we will be reviwing the hand-scanner in the very near future – so don't forget to watch this space for an genuinely in-depth look at this revolutionary product.

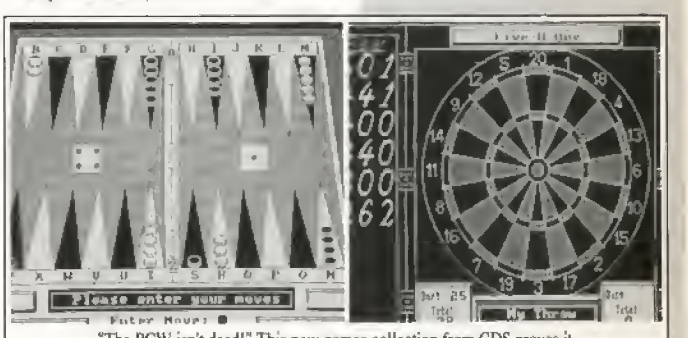
Entertain at home

We are reliably informed by CDS that "No! The PCW isn't dead!". Although one of the office 8512s has been a little green around the drives of late, we didn't think for one moment that the PCW was anything other than fit and raring to go.

The reason for this rather strident declaration was to trumpet the arrival of a new games package. In the past, CDS have had an excellent record on the games front so, at for the moment, at least, there's no reason to think that this new release, called The Complete Home Entertainment Centre (how software houses love these world shattering titles), will be any different.

The software comprises five games on one disc. These are backgammon, darts, dominos, something called a video card arcade, including poker royal, high-low and pontoon. Last, but not least, there's a word search game for a minimum of one and a maximum of four players.

It all sounds like great fun to us and, at the price of £19.99 for all these games, it sounds like good value too. We havn't seen the package yet so we can't pass any definitive 8000 Plus comment. We will, however, keep you posted. If you would like to buy ahead of the review, you should call CDS Software on 0302 321134. You can also write to them at CDS House, Beckett Road, Doncaster, DN2 4AD.



"The PCW isn't dead!" This new games collection from CDS proves it

Sale em's lot

Locomotive Software write to inform us that they are making a slight change to their marketing strategy. For a while last year and earlier this year they have been selling printers, principally the NEC P2200 and NEC P6 Plus. Both of these are 24 pin printers which are supported by Locomotive's 24 pin printer drivers.

The P6 Plus will cost you £500 – it normally retails at around £650 – while the P2200 will set you back a mere £300 – its normal retail price is £385. Both of the Locomotive prices include VAT.

Not only will you get the printers, you will also have the option of buying Locomotive's 24 pin and ordinary 9 pin printer drivers for £35.00; together these would normally cost you £44.90. As if this wasn't enough the company will also provide a cable to connect the printer to the parallel port on your PCW for £10.00. Remember that you will also need an interface if you are using one of the 8000 machines (8256 or 8512), the 9512 comes with a built-in parallel port.

If you would like to take them up on the offer you should call Locomotive on 0306 740606 or you can write to them at Locomotive Software, Dorking Business Park, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 1YL. If you wish to have the printer delivered you should also include £10 for p&p.

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LETAFONT (For PCW with dot matrix) **£5.95**
Instead of seeing the same boring old character set on your PCW screen with Letafont you can introduce any of 16 new styles. See them on your own programs and with most commercial programs. See the fonts ON SCREEN or use them when printing out text files - make your letters more varied and stylish (NOT Locoscript) Use Leta-Edit to edit the 16 fonts provided or redesign the entire character set.

KERMIT AND FRIENDS **£5.95**
Plenty of programs for data transfer between computers (local and remote), access databases and bulletin boards. UKModem 7, Kermit, MEX and various communications utilities. This disc also contains software for PCW Viewdata and Prestel emulation.

STD CODEBOOK **£5.95**
Text files containing lists of all the UK STD codes and corresponding exchange names. Listed in numeric order of STD codes and alphabetical order of exchanges. Files are squeezed to get them on one disc.

WORD-SPREAD-BASES

WORD PROCESSOR **£5.95**
A powerful WordStar-like editor which offers full screen editing, full block operations, windowing, automatic horizontal scroll (line length up to 255 characters), macro functions, word-wrap, formatting, pagination, find/replace, undelete and more.

SPREADSHEET **£5.95**
For home accounts, mortgage repayments, small business and multiple calculation exercises. Workspace of 60 rows by 26 columns, menu-driven command entry, enter text, numeric value or calculation (+ - * / with reference to any cell or total). Print facility and documentation.

DATABASE **£5.95**
A small relational database for storing simple data and producting reports from the data. Uses free format query language with macros and commands plus on-line help. A good introduction to the concept of databases. Disc also contains a useful Inventory Database.

KEYBASE II **£5.95**
Fully menu-driven - Record Set Up, Data Entry, Erase, Count Records, Set Report Fields, Run Report Search, Display Last Output, Repeat Last Search, Search & Extract, Set Key Index, Print Records plus extensive file maintenance and indexing features. This shareware version is useable but limited in capacity but with more than enough to evaluate the program and set up a simple database. "KeyBase is well designed, simple to use and it works. A good value database." 8000 Plus.

NUMBER CRUNCHER **£5.95**
Does for calculations what your Word Processor does for text. Retrieve mathematical expressions (formulae) from disc files, calculate their results, modify them and store them back on to disc. Create files or formulae as you meet them and store them into expression files together with explanatory text. Plenty of menu and screen prompts puts extensive on-line help. Up to 15 sig figs, over 100 characters with any number of brackets and arithmetic, trig, log and % expressions.

PROGRAMMING

THE Z80 PROGRAMMER **£5.95**
A complete Z80 Assembler creates an executable .COM program from your Assembler file. Includes Z80 Disassembler, Z80 Debugger, Z80 Library, 8080 Disassembler, Z80 to 8080 Translator and utilities.

THE C PROGRAMMER **£5.95**
Not sure which language to go for? Try the small C Compiler, a practical and useable introduction to C. The disc includes source code and documentation. Produces executable .COM programs.

C TOOLBOX **£5.95**
Practical examples of C at work. C source (for a variety of compilers) with .COM programs. As a bonus the programs are quite useful too.

PROLOG - 80 **£5.95**
Fascinating introduction to AI. I/O control, database manipulation, global variables, arrays, blocks, unification etc. With editor.

THE LISP PROGRAMMER **£5.95**
Find out more about this fascinating Artificial Intelligence interpreter. Plenty of on-disc documentation.

JRT PASCAL (2 DISC SET) **£10.95**
A professional-quality Pascal Compiler which comes with extensive documentation and plenty of source code examples.

GOING FORTH **£5.95**
A comprehensive FORTH compiler which produces executable programs. Disc contains extensive documentation, library files and utilities.

UTILITIES

INSTA-MENU **£5.95**
Locoscript-style menu presentation for CP/M programs. Easy access to user areas, simple cursor-controlled program selection for running, typing, erasing and copying programs. The ideal "front end".

IN-CONTROL **£5.95**
Two main functions - FILE CONTROL features Copy, Delete, Rename, Print Change User Number, Change Attributes, Log, sort, Go To and Word Processor-style text file editing - DISC CONTROL features Disc Map, Disc Parameters, Sector Editor - File Editor and unerase.

COMPLEAT UTILITIES **£5.95**
NSWP Newsweep one key erase, copy rename and print plus many other features, SUPERZAP Disc sector editor - edit by track/sector ro by filename, DISCKITA disc formatter, 178K data format and 5 1/4" second drive, plus a dozen more useful programs

TEXT PROCESSING UTILITIES **£5.95**
SIDEWAYS - prints text file (eg Spreadsheet) sideways on your printer, SORT any ASCII list into alphabetical order, WORD COUNT, LOCOUNT Word Count for Locoscript files, WSCLEAN, CALENDAR GENERATOR, SPELLING CHECKER, SCORING CARD, BANNER Printers, TYPEWRITER emulator.

DISC ORGANISATION **£5.95**
CATALOGUE your disc collection and produce a printed index, LU LIBRARY for archiving and saving disc space, MENU SYSTEM, FILE DATING SYSTEM, SQUEEZE and UNSQUEEZE for saving up to 40% disc space.

COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS

DISC DESIGN PRODUCTIVITY SOFTWARE

FORMS BOX COMPENDIUM **£19.95**
Save yourself a lot of time and money by using this set of over 80 ready-to print Locoscript forms. Use them as they are or edit them to your requirements. Disc includes Personal Organiser, Home, Finance, Planner and Business sections. No manual required.

UTILITY PLUS **£19.95**
This disc is packed with time-saving programs to get the best out of your PCW. Includes Address Book and Mailing Label Printer, File Sorter, Converter for text to multi-column format, Letter, Word and Sentence Counter, Dot Matrix Printer Set-Up Commands and more.

HYPERTEXT **£19.95**
Regard it as a 3-dimensional text processor. Subject words used in one level are described in more detail in the lower level. Words in the lower level can be further amplified in the next level etc. Hypertext works in a similar way to the human brain by retrieving information using associative links between topics. A very powerful tool when assembling documentation and reference materials.

EXPERT SYSTEM **£19.95**
An Expert System helps analyse a problem logically. With it you can build your own custom knowledge base. Builds up and maintains a database of information which is linked by a pre-defined set of rules. Each rule specifies the facts which have to be true before a conclusion can be reached. A typical expert system would ask a series of questions. Each answer given would then lead to a more detailed question until the system is ready to offer a solution to the problem.

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Textbase is designed to assemble a database from a series of previously created text (ASCII) files. Once assembled in the database the files can be searched, sorted, printed etc.

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Ensure that only authorised persons have access to your files. This effective system uses simple password control to gain access to your files with a key word or key phrase of up to 255 characters.

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A large collection of statistical programs and utilities designed to run under Mallard BASIC. Easy to use with full menu selection.

ADVANTAGE ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE

SLIDER **£9.95**
A unique computer version of the mechanical sliding squares puzzle. Pictures are divided up on a grid of squares, which are then mixed up; your task is to slide them around to re-assemble the pictures.

PCW-DRAUGHTS **£9.95**
A well-presented and challenging version of the well-known board game, played against the computer. Large, clearly presented board making the most of the PCW's hi-resolution graphics.

VERBIAGE **£9.95**
A novel computer game based on the popular TV Quiz "COUNTDOWN" Take turns with the computer to choose 9 letters from the alphabet by stating VOWEL or CONSONENT. Make the longest word you can - the computer will do the same. Whoever has the longest word wins!

TRIVIA QUIZ **£9.95**
A multi-choice game with plenty of fast-action graphics and sound, competitive scoring and a wide variety of questions. Gameplay is easy to understand and each round is short enough to maintain interest. For age 8 to adult. "Guaranteed completely trivial" - 8000 Plus.

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NEVADA COBOL COMPILER **£33.95**
COBOL is an industry standard data processing language, suitable for business applications. Based on ANSI-1974 Standard COBOL, Nevada features runtime error messages, random access and sequential files and integration of assembly language using the DR MAC assembler.

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Offers floating point to 14 digits, trace facility, runtime error messages, linker and assembler, 26 built-in functions, 9 built-in procedures, 15 I/O functions, random sequential and indexed file I/O functions, histogram activity analyser and access to system calls.

NEVADA FORTRAN COMPILER **£33.95**
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HISOFT C COMPILER Popular compiler with ED80 editor £44.95
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HISOFT PASCAL 80 Well-known compiler with ED80 editor £44.95
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HISOFT DEVPAC 80 V2 Complete Z80 Assembler with ED80 .£44.95

ADVANTAGE (EP) 56 BATH ROAD, CHELTENHAM GL53 7HJ TEL 0242 224340

Do the Locomotive

PCW owners stand by; Locomotive Software are, once again, in creative mode. Said Managing Director Howard Fisher, "I can reveal that work is going on at the moment on a major new product for the PCW." Fisher, with characteristic reserve, could not supply any details about the new product. It would certainly be exciting to see Locomotive bringing out a spreadsheet (the long awaited LocoSpread, dare we hope?) to team up with LocoScript, LocoChar, LocoMail and LocoFile. This could mean that you and your PCW might never have to leave the LocoEnvironment. Alternatively, and probably more likely given Locomotive's track record, the new launch could be a rival for Software Imperative's next release for the PCW, rumoured to be a 'writer's tool'. Other possibilities are a desktop environment using pop-up tools such as calculators, notebooks and alarm clocks. And, of course, the arrival of new RAMpacs mean that the sky is the limit for the PCW.

Mr Fisher could not disclose a release date for the new launch, but told us "The next show we are booked to go to is the Business Computing '90 exhibition later this year, and I wouldn't be at all surprised if we chose that time to make an announcement." It appears that there is more going on in Dorking (home of Locomotive) than the upstart PC LocoScript. Let's hope that Mr Fisher is a little more verbose come the time. In the meantime News Plus will try to dig out more details.

It's all Greek to us

Exemplar Design supremo John Evans is not content to sit back on his laurels as the producer of some of the most consistently excellent PCW software (see our review of MD Cleartext – page 45), Exemplar have now produced some more fonts to be used with Creative Technology's Micro Design II.

Η ΚΑΙΝΗ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ

ΠΑΥΛΟΥ ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ

ΠΡΟΣ ΚΟΡΙΝΘΙΟΥΣ

ΠΡΩΤΗ ΠΣΠ

All Croation on the western front ... well Greek and Cyrillic actually, from Exemplar Design

MD Cleartext brought large, clear fonts and letters as well as 'non-English characters sets such as French and Spanish to the PCW owner. The new software, Cleartext Extra brings even more goodies. It seemed at first that the press release which heralded the news was meant for the Greek or Russian market. This was not the case, however, what we had been attempting to read (and it is reproduced here) were examples of the new Greek and Cyrillic fonts for use with Micro Design II.

Exemplar tell us that these two fonts are 'whole pixel' in design – this means that they don't lose their smooth lines when transferred from screen to printer. Not only do you get these fonts, you also have access to additional 'standard' fonts and "several worked examples of page layouts and publishing formats." After having spent a few hours reviewing MD Cleartext this month and finding it time well spent, we feel quite safe in giving an early thumbs up to this new launch from Exemplar Design. The launch date is June 1990 and the price, £15.95. You can obtain the Cleartext Extra from Exemplar Design at, PO Box 683, Bath BA 1XU.

Just trash

News has come our way of a new 'on-line' game for Micronet and Prestel users. The game is called Trash and is purported to be " ... a new environmentally-friendly multi-user game with a futuristic and humorous theme ... The game is designed to appeal to all types of players from the serious role playing aficionado to people who enjoy puzzle solving to those who just want to drop in for a chat and some fun. What fun! Where else are players encouraged to grow spaceships, meet fire-breathing cabbages, teach machinery to hum in tune and cause pink blancmange to rain from the sky?"

Up to 64 people can play at one time and each player's actions affect the other's. So what use is this to the PCW user? Well, all you need to play is an interface, a modem, a telephone line and membership to Micronet (2p per minute, off peak, 8p per minute, peak, plus usual Micronet charges), Prestel (6p, off peak, 12p, peak and usual Prestel charges).

On the one hand this sounds like a good fun way of getting into comms (computerese for communicating with other computers by telephone line). The initial outlay for a modem can be anything from £180-90 up to £500. The interface will cost you around £50. Membership of the organisations is added to this as is the nightly or daily log-on charges. For more information you should call, free, 0800 200 700. **STOP PRESS:** Recent reports reveal that Micronet have had various of their chatline services discontinued for "an unlimited period". This was due to the fact that foul language and even physical threats had been observed on the bulletin board. Happily "users are up in arms over the fact that the actions of the few have jeapardised the enjoyment of the many".

The opening access screen to Trash

Showing off

The Which Computer Show was celebrating its tenth anniversary this year, with over 550 exhibitors. Opened by the Soviet Ambassador, His Excellency Leonid Zamyatin, the show was considerably larger than previous years, swelled by the addition of new features including a CAD village, and a DTP and Business Graphics Centre.

Amstrad were represented in full force, exhibiting both the PCW 8000 series and the 9512 demonstrating LocoScript 2. Also on display was their range of fax machines, one of which we finally managed to negotiate out of darkest Brentwood and (soon) into 8000 Plus reviews room.

His Excellency Leonid Zamyatin opens the Which Computer? Show at the NEC.

Exhibitors were said to he pleased with the volume of visitors present at the show. Said John Mahony, of Paragon Communications (PR consultants for the show), "Exhibitors were pleased with the quality and the volume of clients visiting this year's show. There was a high level of interest, and a great deal of useful contacts were made. Considering that the date was changed, and that the show ran back to back with the Communications '90 exhibition, their response is pleasing", he explained. An attendance figure has not yet been confirmed, but is estimated to be in the region of 66,000.

As usual there was exotica of every computer kind. PC owners and prospective buyers were deluged with incredibly expensive pieces of 'kit' such as monitors which allow you to see text in hundreds of colours and which will cost you an arm and a leg.

There were optical mice – although the new Kempston rodent for the PCW will do the job just as well and there were computers which can promise to be able to go even faster than the ones which went 'twice as fast' last year.

Once more, any rumours of the PCW's demise were assuaged with the good news from both Creative Technology and Locomotive. That's not to mention the fact that Amstrad had the machines on show at such a prestigious event.

Deals were made and new launches launched but still the PCW goes on. No one should be surprised to see just about all of this year's 'hi tech' up for replacement at the next Which Computer Show – all that is except for the PCW.

The Thames are hard

Over the last few months we have expended much space on the problems of transferring data between PCWs and Apple Macintosh or IBM (and clone) computers. Thameslink Ltd, a company based in Windsor, have decided to tackle the task head on.

The company will transfer LocoScript documents directly from your discs over to Mac or PC format and, this is the good bit, they will retain all the codes and formats which you worked so hard to put in. They have a good background and will do their best to give you a one day turn around.

For more detailed information you should call Roger Cullingham at Thameslink on 0753 863356 or write to them at Thameslink Desktop Publishing 99-101, St Leonards Road, Windsor, Berks, SL4 1PR.

The KIDS are all right

It won't come as any kind of a surprise to our long-time readers to hear that yet another charitable organisation is making use of the PCW and all that the machine offers.

This time it's an organisation calld KIDS (registered charity number 275936), based in Hull. KIDS, as the name suggests, revolves around what some American child-pyschologists are sometimes heard to call 'young adults'. To the rest of us they mean children – in this case children with special educational needs and problems.

Swap formats and help the charity for children with learning difficulties

KIDS deals with children who might have learning difficulties, disabilities and other problems which stop them from attaining their full potential under conventional educattional facilities.

Not only does the organisation aim its resources at helping the children, it also involves parents in its many activities. In fact one of the main precepts of the charity is to ensure that not only are pyschologists, social workers and other professionally trained people incorporated in the process of educating the children they also make sure that families are included.

From the look of the brochure which accompanied the press release it seems that KIDS is a highly professional set-up which has moved away from the old system of "take 'em out of society and hope". So, what are they offering the PCW user?

For a £6.00 donation they provide a data transfer service from PCW 3 inch discs over to IBM 3.5 or 5.25 inch format. The £6.00 you send includes the new IBM disc, formatting and post and packaging and at least 75% of the money donated will go direct to the charity.

According to Phil Wade of KIDS, "The service may be used for the transfer of any type of file, although generally it is only meaningful to have ASCII files transferred or LocoScript documents which will be used with LocoScript PC."

If you would like to make use of the service you should send your PCW (3 inch) discs, a note saying whether you wish a 3.5 or 5.25 inch disc in return to;

Phil Wade, Hull University, Computer Centre, Hull, HU6 7RX. You can also phone on 0482 465796.

Make cheques or postal orders payable to KIDS, these should be for £6.00 but we're sure that the charity wouldn't turn their noses up at £10 or even £100. There is no limit on the number of files transferred on each disc; the charge is worked out according to the number of discs; so get charitable, and get going. ●

A right dust-up

So. Amstrad come out with a cutsheet feeder for the 9512. An excellent idea without doubt. But what about those PCW owners who love to keep their machines clean and tidy and above all dust free? It appeared to us that no dust covers were available to 9512 owners, that was until we received a splendid press release from a company called Jenart Design. They can provide dust covers for 9512s with or without cutsheet feeders.

In the case of the sheet feeding 9512, the cost of an ozone friendly, grey nylon (not PVC) set of three covers (keyboard, printer and screen) is £15.25 inclusive of VAT and p&p. For more information you should call Jenart Design on 07695 4127.

CLUB NEWS

Club News is always glad to hear from anyone who runs, or is in involved in, any organisation concerned with the PCW. Your club or group might be specifically aimed at the PCW, on the other hand it might merely use the machine to speed up and streamline the general club working. Whatever it is, if there is a PCW involved we would like to hear about it. If you would like to popularise, publicise and promulgate your club, group or organisation you should send details to Club News, 8000 Plus Magazine, Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2XF. We're sorry but because we are busy trying to produce the magazine we normally don't have the time for telephone calls.

Quoth the raven, "Littlemore"

Yet another club has been brought to our attention. Mr R G Hughes who wrote to us says that it could "... best be described as a small workshop group", but the principle is the same. Based in Littlemore, a suburb of Oxford – an aposite site for a place of learning if ever there was one – the Littlemore Amstrad PCW User Group (LAPUG?) has been running for some eighteen months now.

The club cum workshop meets at the Peers School, Littlemore every Tuesday during term time. They make use of the adult education centre which has all three of the PCW range in the form of a 9512, 8512 and 8256. Mr Rogers tells us that members include a writer (who specialises in LocoChar), a radio enthusiast who makes use of various databases and a person who organises flower shows – and that's just three of them. The group can already claim to be a success and makes an annual charge of £8 to cover costs.

Recently they have covered LocoScript 2 and will soon be embarking on an explanatory couple of sessions on Mini Office Professional. Expertise in the group ranges through SuperCalc 2, Masterfile 8000 and many of the desktop publishing packages available on the PCW. If you would like to find out more about the club you can call Mr RG Hughes on 0865 242720.

Hag-read

It's that Hereford time again. For new readers to 8000 Plus and Club News in particular we should just tell you that the Hereford Amstrad PCW User Group (called – rather cheatingly HAG rather than HAPUG) is fast becoming the running soap of these pages.

The affable and incredibly enthusiastic David Rose doesn't appear to have the word lazy in his vocuabulary, Dave Ellis, the Public Domain king, has been serving the PCW community for many years (he did however take offence to the virus spoof in April's Postscript pages ... sorry about that Dave). Anyway David Rose informs us that fellow club-member and ex-headmaster, Dennis Eagles, is busy writing programs for various of the 'Haggers'.

The group, which is now some thirty strong recently toured the Rank Zerox Computer Centre and factory at Micheldean in Gloucestershire on an educational trip. They were lead around by Mr Philip Brown, a Departmental Manager. More trips, tutorials and good times are planned for the future, including a barbecue. If you would like to find out more about the club you should phone David Rose on the following number 0432 267123.

How to form a club

We recently received a letter from Mrs Gladys Baker of Stockton-on-Tees. She writes, "I am interested in forming an Amstrad PCW User's Group in my area and would be glad of your assistance. I need guidance on the best way to approach the organising and marketing of the club."

Well, Mrs Baker, you've take the right first step by writing to Club News. The next thing is to put up some LocoScripted (or Protexted or Micro Designed ...) adverts up in local shops or libraries. Marketing the club will come later when you have enough members. Anyone in the area wishing to join in with this new venture should call Mrs Baker on 0642 580018.

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9512 Surgery

Three pages for 9512 owners begin here as Tim Smith shows you how to fit 3.5 and 5.25 inch drives to the daisywheeled delight

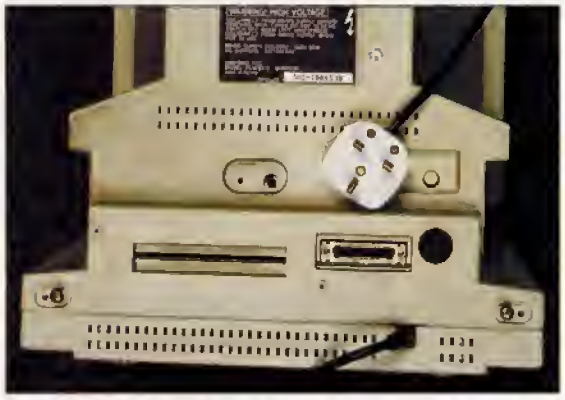
For some strange reason, it would appear to be the case that many people feel that the 9512 was born a single drive computer and is fated to spend the rest of its days as such. This is far from being the case as we are about to show you. This month we will be dealing with the relatively easy task of fitting the two external drives which are presently available for the PCW: the 3.5 inch drive which is fast becoming the industry standard and the 5.25 inch drive which once was and still takes the cheapest disc size around.

Fitting new drives may well seem to some to be an needless extravagance, especially fitting drives which don't even take PCW(3 inch) disc formats. But hold hard and think for a second about doubling the storage capacity on your machine and being able to buy cheaper discs. Combine this with the fact that backing-up your data becomes easier and that using these new disc formats can, in some cases, enable you to interface your PCW with other computers such as PCs and you might get some idea of the usefulness of the upgrade.

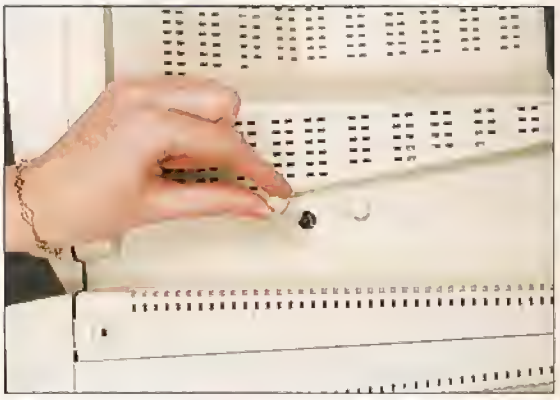
Next month we will deal with the slightly more complex task of fitting an internal PCW 3 inch drive for the 9512.

Back-up and survive

Because there is no PCW software available on either of these disc formats, the most popular use for them is as back-up storage devices. When formatted using DISCKIT.COM or LocoScript 2, both 5.25 and 3.5 formats will give you a full 704k of space. Once you have one of them fitted, it would be in your interest to get into a regular backing-up routine.



1 The side of the PCW 9512 which you rarely get to see - the back. There are six retaining screws hidden on the machine - they are to be found left and right of the base (back), left and right of the head (back) and on each side of the machine towards the front. You will need a crosshead (Philips) screwdriver to remove them. Unlike the 8000 series, these screws are easy to reach.

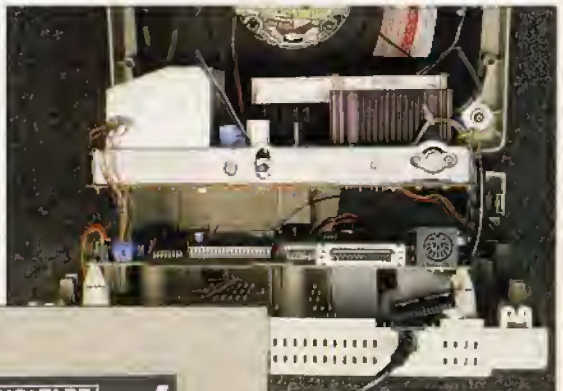


2 Once you have removed the screws, you might like to try removing the cover. This will not be possible until you have also pulled out the two switches on the side of the machine. These are the contrast and brightness controls which can simply be pulled from their sockets - as demonstrated here by the Editor and chief 9512 user in the office.

3 Once you have taken the cover off the PCW, your warranty (if you have had the 9512 for less than a year it will still be under warranty) goes out of the window.

What we have here are the guts of the machine. To give you some idea of perspective, the green panel towards the top of the picture relates to the screen. The small, black rectangular plate at the bottom is the parallel port which is used to connect additional dot matrix printers among other peripherals.

5 The 9512, like any piece of electronic equipment, will retain an amount of voltage for a short while. If you are at all worried about this you should leave your machine turned off and unplugged over night.



4 Before we set about fitting the drives themselves, it might be an idea to reacquaint ourselves with the 9512 from the inside out as it were. The expansion card is at the bottom of the picture and, for the first time, you can see that the card edge, which protrudes from the back of the machine, is actually a flat card with circuitry. It is also fragile so be very careful not to bend it or scratch its surface with the screwdriver.

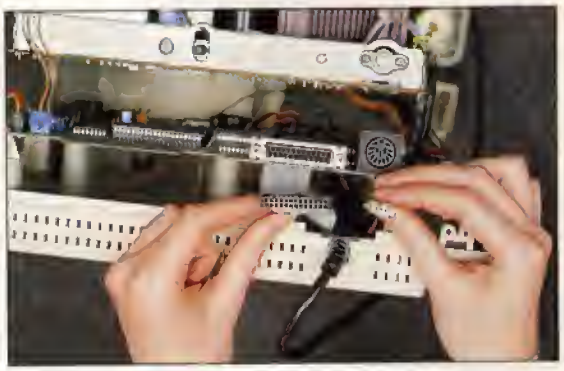
The 3.5 inch drive

The standard 3 inch drive which comes with the PCW has been overlooked by the giants of computing such as IBM (International Business Machines for those who might have wondered); the new standard is set to be the 3.5 inch drive which you will see fitted to Apple Macintosh and IBM computers.

Like the PCW's 3 inch version, the 3.5 incher arrives in its very own hard plastic case, is sturdy and can be carried quite happily without the need for an additional box. Prices are similiar to that which you would pay for a 3 inch disc although the 3.5 inch discs are far more widely available and if you get lucky you may well be able to buy cheaply in bulk.

● *Thanks to Phil Craven at Compact Micros for the 3.5 inch drive priced at £79.95 (including p&p). Call them on 0274 640589.*

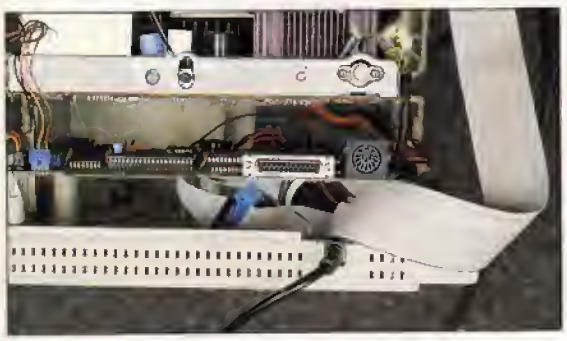
1 The first thing to remember is that this drive does not fit internally. This means that you will need to thread the new drive's ribbon cable through the printer port slot at the back of the 9512. Leave yourself enough to work with and don't worry, the casing will re-fit and the parallel port will not be obscured by the emerging cable.



2 The 3.5 inch drive comes with no additional power supply as the PCW is quite capable of supporting an extra drive of this size. The two cable heads which you can see are the 9512's power and information handling cables. The larger black cable head handles the data while the small, white one provides the energy. Don't worry about shocks, both cables are safe and can be held.

3 For the first time on the scene, the disc drive itself. As you can see it comes in a sturdy, free-standing case. The two cables which you can see being so lovingly held belong to the drive. The blue cable-head is the information carrier which connects to the black head we pointed out in picture 4. The smaller, brown cable handles the power.

4 Having dug the 9512's cables from its innards the next job is simply to match them up with those of the drive. You may find that the lug on the drive's power cable might need to be snipped off. The connections can only be made in one way so be careful not to force them as this will only serve to damage one of the other of them and frustrate you.



5 Believe it or not, the cables are still being fed through the parallel port - we aren't cheating. It just goes to show how much leeway you have to work with. Once everything is connected up you should 'store' the newly connected cables in the depths of the machine. This might seem rather untidy for an expensive piece of equipment like the 9512 but worry not, it'll still do its job.

6 As you can now see, with the cover refitted the cable and port do not interfere with with each other. The cable length will also give you plenty to work with. Both power supply and data handler come off the end of this ribbon cable as it splits, but as you will have discovered when fitting the drive, this split will now take place within the 9512 itself.

7 The 3.5 inch drive is now fitted and very smooth it looks too. The PCW of course does not know what size its new addition is and will treat the drive exactly as if it were a normal 3 inch. This means that you will now have an A: and B: drive with the 3.5 inch drive taking up the position of the B:. Use DISCKIT.COM or LocoScript 2 to format 3.5 inch discs in exactly the same way as you would with 3 inchers.

Buying the discs

With the new drive fitted you can get down to work as normal. The drive itself is hard wearing and should give you years of use.

Because this form of disc is rapidly becoming the 'industry standard' you will find most large stores such as Dixons selling them. Of course many of our advertisers also supply this format so it is worth while shopping around and buying in a bulk supply (say 30) to be formatted as and when you need them.

Slipped disk?

Over the years, many of our readers have queried our use of the word 'disc' instead of 'disk'. To be absolutely, completely, utterly and pedantically correct, the latter - being short for 'diskette' - would be the proper usage. "Disc' is short for nothing other than 'discus' or 'discombobulated'. So why do we do it? As with most things in life, blame Amstrad. For when they launched the PCW's elder brother, the CPC, they dyslexically decided that it should have a 'disc drive' .... That's our excuse ...er, reason ... and we're sticking to it.

MSDOS v CP/M

Even though the new 5.25 inch drive comes with the TDOS file transfer software this does not mean that you can run MSDOS (MicroSoft Disc Operating System) files on the PCW. Read last month's issue for further information.

The 5.25 inch drive

Fast going out of fashion for the "make everything 10000 times faster so that mistakes are twice as rapid" school of PC computing, the 5.25 inch disc format is still widely available from most outlets.

Unlike the 3 inch and 3.5 inch format, the 5.25 inch version does not come in its own hard case and needs slightly more looking after.

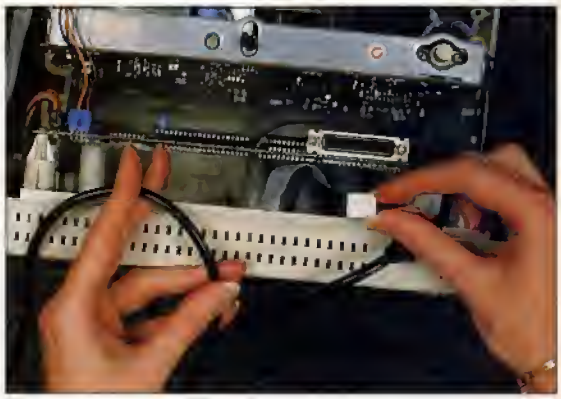
The Pace drive which we are going to fit here comes courtesy of Silicon city (details at the end of this box) and is fitted with a toggle at the back. This switches between 80 track, PCW format and 40 track, PC format. With the TDOS supplied software this means that file transfer between the two types of machine is easy.

● *Thanks to Silicon City (0209 891141) for the disc which costs £134 inclusive..*

Read all about it

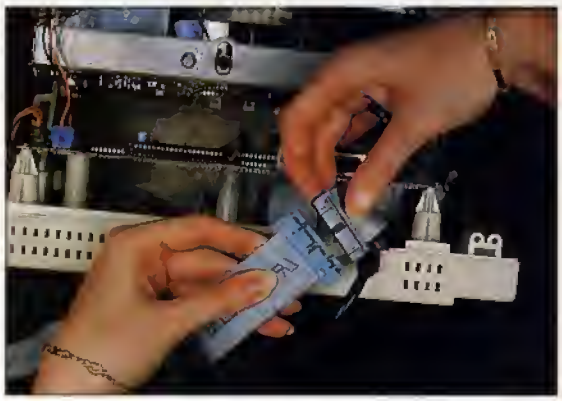
Due to the fact that we wanted to make this 'walk-through' as clearly illustrated as possible, we have not got the space to tell you in detail about TDOS. This software comes bundled with the Pace drive and allows file transfer between PCW and PC. For more information, see last month's 8000 Plus available as a back-issue from our Somerton office for see page 51.

1 As with the 3.5 inch drive, the ribbon cable for the 5.25 inch version needs to be fed through the parallel port at the back of the 9512. Its own power cable does not and cannot be. You will need to have a plug handy as well due to the fact that the fashion today is not to bother with fitted plugs. This minor moan, however, is about the only one we have.



2 As you can see, the Pace 5.25 inch drive does not make any use of the PCW's built-in power supply. The two are simply incompatible. This means that you should tidy away the 9512's small power lead before getting to work on fitting the new drive. Don't worry about voltage being carried, there is no danger of this.

3 The 5.25 inch drive itself. A large and incredibly hardwearing piece of kit - we know, having dropped the one we regularly use in the office several times. The thick black lead is the power cable which takes a normal household plug. It does mean, however, that you will need two sockets close to the PCW. The ribbon cable is the data handler which goes into the 9512 for connection.



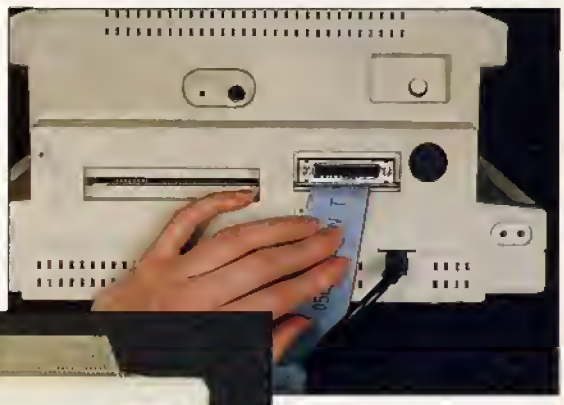
4 Take the free grey ribbon cable from the inside of the PCW and prepare to fit it to that of the new drive. The rather imposing head for the drive's cable gives you plenty of help in aligning the two for connection. Be careful not to force the two together, if they seem to be giving you trouble then you've got them the wrong way around.

Red-faced card

Upon receiving a new drive of any size, be it 3 inch, 3.5 inch or 5.25 inch, you will find inserted therein an exotically cut piece of card (*Get on with it, Ed*) This is to protect the drive during its travels from the suppliers to its new home. Unlike one hapless reader who 'phoned us in a state of panic wondering why their new drive wouldn't work, please remember to remove this card from the drive before inserting a disc.

5 There, the two cables fit quite snugly and with no forcing. It is essential that you do not bend any of the pins in the head of the 5.25 inch drive's cable as this will, at best, slow down the flow of data or, at worst, write off your new investment altogether.

Be gentle with it and it will be good to you. When the connection is made, all you have to do is tuck the newly joined cables away.



6 Refit the back of the PCW and find those six retaining screws which, of course, you left safely in a box or jam jar.

The cable from the new drive may well look large but don't worry; with a little patience it will fit and not interfere with the working of the parallel port. In fact it is quite possible to have the PCW's ribbon cable poking through the port for quick connection and disconnection. However there is more danger of damaging it this way.

7 From start to finish the job should take you about half an hour - but no speed trials here. When fitted, the PCW treats the new drive exactly if it were a standard 3 inch drive, so get formatting.

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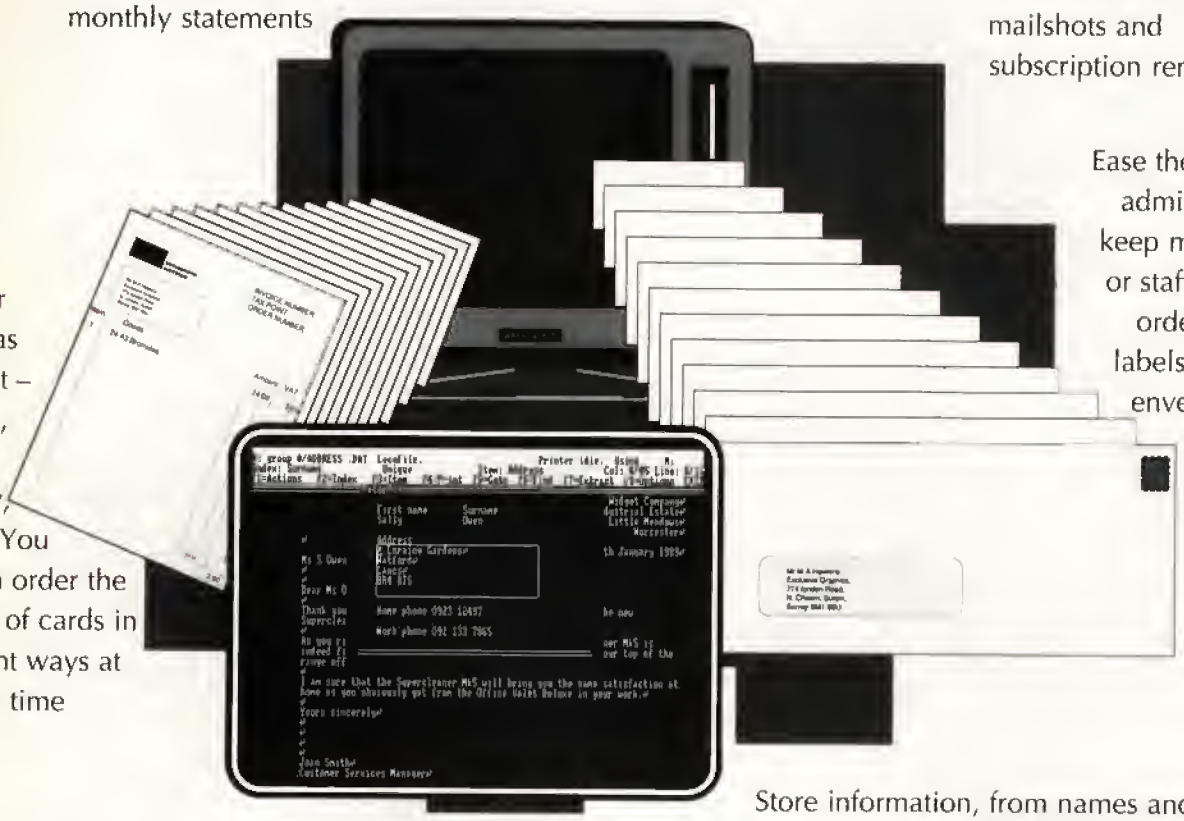

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Good Relations

Masterfile allows you to link two or more databases to each other, perform calculations, and almost everything else. Rob Ainsley shows you how

Hot tip

Load and print a file called TIPS from your Masterfile copy disc. It contains dozens of questions and answers that you'll find useful.

One of Masterfile's most powerful characteristics is its ability to let you use information from one database in another, making data files 'relational'. Basically by making one item in database 'A' the key of database 'B', you can automatically have the information in 'B' included in 'A'. Here's an example;

Suppose you are making up a customer or club member database and wish to include in each person's information the address of their nearest regional office or club branch. You could store this in a field called Local branch, say. Obviously it will be tedious entering the same address each time into all the people who live in the south-west area, and you'll almost certainly make mistakes. An easier way would be to enter a simple code into each person's record to denote the area – 'sw' for south-west, 'm' for Midlands and so on – and then make up a separate database where each record consists of the code and the branch details. Finally you tell Masterfile to look up and insert the branch details appropriate to the code when it's handling the main database. Here it is step by step.

First make a new file. It is keyed, with two fields: Local branch (which *must* be the key field, and *must* have the same name as the field it will be linked to in the main database) and branch address. A typical record might be 'Local branch: sw Branch address: South West Regional Office, 4_High_St_Exeter _ Devon_EX16 7TR.' Save it as say BRANCHES. Don't bother with making up any formats.

Branching out

Now, in your main database, create or edit a format as usual. When you come to set out the place for the Local branch address, ask to insert record data with **I** then **D**, but give **Y** for 'yes' to 'External data (Y/N)?' (usually you say no). Now you're prompted for the name of the external file, which is **BRANCHES**, and then for the number of the field you want to insert. You want the branch address to appear, which is field 2 in BRANCHES, so give '2'. Now you can define the area the address is to take up as usual with **M** and **P**. You see at the bottom the message that **BRANCHES 02** is the item you're inserting.

When you come to display the file you should see the branch addresses appear in the right places. When entering records, though, all you have to do is enter 'sw', 'w' or 'm' - or whatever codes you choose. Much easier! The addresses print out as well as being displayed of course. If you have problems, page 9.2 of the manual should help.

You can use relational files to great effect – you can link one file with up to seven others (so long as they're on the same disc) and the linked files can have any number of fields.

For example, your BRANCHES file might have a field 3 (Area representative) and field 4 (their phone number). In the main database you can then specify an item in a format to take external data from BRANCHES, in a similar way as above, but specify field 3 or 4 and insert the name of the area rep or their phone number.

The 'Local branch' field in the main database which contains the codes 'sw', 'm', 'se' and so on, is a sort of gateway into the file BRANCHES, via its key field, also called, 'Local branch', and can be used to pick out any of the items in BRANCHES for insertion into the main file.

A common use for relational files is linking up files containing customer details with files containing product details, the link item being a product code. (This would be the key field of the product

Making the right connections ...

```
Local branch          : s
Branch address        : Scottish Regional Office Wesley House Edinburgh Scotland
```

1. Your BRANCHES file contains the code – s for Scotland, for example – and the full address.

```
Name                  : Morag McGowan
Address               : 9 High St Glasgow
Date joined           : 09 Aug 88
Local branch          : s
```

2. The main data file must have a field called 'Local branch' – the same as the key field in the BRANCHES file – if it is to link up to it. This entry has the code s for Scotland.

```
Name                    Address                       Local branch

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX    XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX    XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
Joined XXXXXXXXXXXXX    XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX    XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
                        XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX    XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
                        XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX    XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
                        XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX    XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
```

3. Format 1 in the main file is where you tell Masterfile how to link up the main file to BRANCHES. That load of Xs under the heading 'Local branch' has been specified as External data from the file BRANCHES and is field number 2...

```
COMPLETE LIST OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS: late 19th/early 20th centuries

  Author              No.   Title
HAMILTON Miss C.J      59 A Battle With The Waves;or,The Herring Boat
SHIPLEY Mary E         96 A Month At Brighton,And What Came Of It
S.W.                   92 A Visit To London ...
STRETTON Hesba         99 Alone In London
BARSTOW Charles H      28 Angels Unawares
BLAND E.A              33 Annie Deloraine's Aunt
BELL Catherine D       32 Aunt Ailie;or,Patience And Its Reward
ABBOTT John S.C         5 Benjamin Franklin Printer's Boy, Statesman, Philosopher And Pat
LESLIE Emma            70 Bolingbroke's Folly
WILKINS W. J.         107 Breaking His Fetters
WETHERELL Elizabeth   106 Carl Krinken:His Christmas Stocking
ANON                    9 Christie's Old Organ; Or, "Home Sweet Home"
HAMER Sarah Selina     57 Christine's Crook
FRASER Alexander A     49 Daddy Crips' Waifs, A Tale Of Australasian Life And Adventure
PEARSE Mark Guy        86 Daniel Quorm, And His Religious Notions
BROWNE T.M             36 Dawson's Madge;or,The Poacher's Daughter
COLBECK Alfred         42 Dick Of The "Paradise"
FRASER M. C.           50 Dora Murray's Ideal And How It Came To Her
PRATT E.S              88 Dorothy Northbrooke, The Story Of A Sister's Influence
PAYNE E. W.            85 Earth's Riches: or, Underground Stores
CUPPLES Mrs. George    43 Edenside Or The Lights And Shadows Of Our Village

H = help on/off
Drive:B | File:X01BOOKS | Records:00107 | Selected:00107 | Key:Author | Format:1
```

4. ...and when you display the main file under this format, Masterfile looks up and inserts the appropriate addresses for you.

file). Hence the proliferation of barcoding in modern retailing!

Calculated risks

Masterfile can take a lot of drudgery out of your data processing by doing calculations for you. Here's a quick example. Your club membership fee has increased by 50% over all categories. Instead of laboriously changing each person's subs as shown in the database, you can get Masterfile to do it for you. Go to the appropriate format and insert a new element, a heading. Use **M** to move the heading down into the area occupied by the name and address details and so on: it doesn't matter where, though it's probably best to put it somewhere where it doesn't overlap with other information. Suppose the subs amount is field 6; edit the heading and make it read **[6]=[6]*1.5.**

Now, anything classed as a heading occurring in a data zone can contain calculations, using square brackets to refer to the field, and +-*/ to mean respectively add, subtract, multiply and divide. So the above instruction means 'take what is in field 6, multiply it by 1.5 (i.e. increase by 50%) and put the new amount into field 6'. Notice that the **[6]=[6]*1.5** business is a sort of embedded command; it displays on the format, but not on the screen display or printout – so the only criteria for deciding where to put it is ease of viewing of the format.

When you come to display the file, nothing seems to have happened. You must tell Masterfile to perform the calculation for you – this is [C] from the main menu. You'll see the message 'Calculating' appear and the number of records completed. When it beeps, press [D] for display and the amended subs amounts will be shown. But you can go further than this. In your product list you can get Masterfile to calculate your profit or tax for you. Suppose you have a database in which a typical entry is:

Product:	**Widget**
Cost price:	**5.59**
Selling price:	**9.95**
Profit:	**——**
Percentage profit:	**——**

You don't bother to enter amounts for the last two – they can be calculated for you. Set up a format as usual, first entering headings in this format ([I] for **'insert'**, [H] for **'heading'**, [M] for **'move'** then [E] for **'edit'**) in the following order, putting them in the data zone somewhere out of the way: **[4]=[3]-[2] [5]=100*[4]/[3].** Then define slots for all six data items. (You'll want to use 'A' for **'attributes'** from the **'Record data'** menu to make the leading symbol £ and select two decimal places on items 2, 3, 4 and 6, but have no leading symbol and select no decimal places on 5).

Then from the main menu press [C] for **'calculate'** and [D] for **'display'**. The amounts you didn't enter are now calculated and displayed. The order of entry of things into the format is very important, because Masterfile does calculations in that order.

Suppose you now added the heading calculation **[2]=[2]+1** into the format, and then calculated and displayed; you'd find that item 2, the cost price, was increased by 1 in all products, but that the profit and percentage profit figures were all the old values. They'd already been calculated by the time the new value of item 2 was worked out. When you save a file, you save it in its last calculated state. Next time you load it up and display it, the calculated figures will all be shown.

Numbers game

It can be useful to put the record number into a record for two reasons. To do this you need a format which includes the record number displayed in it. First, Masterfile lets you jump to any record immediately by pressing [G] when in display mode followed by the record number – this is much quicker than the normal method of searching for Mr Jones's record, say, by searching for all records which contain Jones in the name and finding the right one. And, if you have printed out a list of all the entries in the database together with their record number, then you have a reference table that will let you jump to any record by its number straight away. Second, it gives you a number unique to each record that can be useful in distinguishing several similar entries.

As an example, load up the books file X01BOOKS from your Masterfile program disc. Edit format 1 by pressing [F] then [V] then 1. Press [I] for **'insert'** and then [H] for **'heading'**. Move the * to the place in the data zone (in the area that contains the XXXXs) where the record number is to appear by [M] and the cursors, then hit [E] for **'edit'**.

Give the heading text as **%%%%**. You'll now find that on displaying the file, the record numbers are inserted. Masterfile numbers its records in key order, so if the key is the name and you have a hundred customers in your database, you might find that Mr Aaron is record 1 while Ms Zzyniewski is record 100.

These numbers don't change if you re-sort the file using [K]. If this file is resorted in order of money spent with you, the profligate Ms Zzyniewski may well be top of the new list, but will still be record 100. They also don't change if you select some members and mark them off as a separate set. However, if you **'save a partial file'** then when you load this new file you'll find the records have been re-numbered. ●

Next month...

A collection of tips covering data exchange with LocoScript and Protext, reconstruction of a database, fancy embellishments to your formats, mail merging and labels, and more.

Calculating little devil

```
Product    Cost price  Selling price  Profit     Profit p.c.
XXXXXXXX   £££.£££     £££.£££        £££.£££    XX      (4)=(3)-(2)  (5)=100*(4)/(3)
```

5. Formats that includes calculations to work out the profit (selling price minus cost price) and percentage (profit divided by selling price). Note how these are entered as headings and appear on the formate...

```
Product    Cost price  Selling price  Profit     Profit p.c.
Widgets    £1.78       £7.85          £2.19      55
Doodahs    £6.32       £11.96         £5.64      47
Thingies   £14.86      £24.98         £10.09     40
```

6. ...but not on the display. After pressing [C] for calculate the appropriate arithmetic is done for you..

Heading for a record

```
COMPLETE LIST OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS: late 19th/early 20th centuries

Author              No.   Title
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX  %%%%  XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
```

7. That extra heading consisting of %%%% put into the books example file, format 1, has the effect of inserting the record numbers...

```
COMPLETE LIST OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS: late 19th/early 20th centuries

Author              No.   Title
A.L.O.E             1  My Neighbour's Shoes;or,Feeling For Others
A.L.O.E             2  The Roby Family;or, Battling With The World
A.L.O.E             3  The Golden Fleece;or, Who Wins The Prize?
A.L.O.E.            4  The Backward Swing, And Other Stories
ABBOTT John S.C     5  Benjamin Franklin Printer's Boy, Statesman, Philosopher And Pat
ACKWORTH J.M.O.     6  From Rung To Rung
ADAMS The Rev. H.C., 7  The Widow's Son
ADELINE             8  Helen Leslie;or, Truth And Error
ANON                9  Christie's Old Organ; Or, "Home Sweet Home"
ANON               10  I Wa  ng;or,C  n And H  Grandchil  n
```

8. ...when the file is displayed.

```
COMPLETE LIST OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS: late 19th/early 20th centuries

Author              No.   Title
HAMILTON Miss C.J   59  A Battle With The Waves;or,The Herring Boat
SHIPLEY Mary E      96  A Month At Brighton,And What Came Of It
S.W.                92  A Visit To London ...
STRETTON Hesba      99  Alone In London
BARSTOW Charles H   29  Angels Unawares
BLAND E.A           33  Annie Deloraine's Aunt
BELL Catherine D    32  Aunt Ailie;or,Patience And Its Reward
ABBOTT John S.C      5  Benjamin Franklin Printer's Boy, Statesman, Philosopher And Pat
LESLIE Emma         70  Bolingbroke's Folly
WILKINS W. J.      107  Breaking His Fetters
WETH   L Eliza  h  106  rl Krin  His Chri  mas Stock
AN                      isti   Org   "Hom   Hom
```

9. If you sort the file into another order, such as by book title, the record numbers stay as they were originally.

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Turf Luck!

Why should the bookies always get the best from the turf? Tim Smith gambols through three packages which aim to put the odds in your favour

National lampoon

There is little or no point in putting hard-earned cash, with or without a computer program, on races of over twelve horses. This is why, on the morning of the Grand National, you will find the bookmakers empty of regular punters but packed with people who would not normally be caught dead near the places. The bigger the field (and the National regularly pulls down 40 runners or more) the longer the odds. The longer the odds, the less chance of winning. Take our advice and stick to the smaller meetings with horses who have plenty of form.

Horse racing is a myth to some and a must to others. The occasion of a great race meeting such as Royal Ascot or the Cheltenham festival sees fortunes won and lost and stories told. Yet it still appears to be a fact of life that the bookmakers are the ones who profit the most. One reason for this might well be that most people can't be bothered with the spade work involved in collating and analysing form details. They would prefer instead to put their money on the occasional Desert Orchid or Shergar or, failing this, the famous 'horse with the prettiest name'.

Your PCW, on the other hand, wouldn't get the slightest frisson of excitement from the occasion and wouldn't even care if it 'went through the card' (won all the races on a given day). The statistics which surround the turf are grist to the PCW mill. And that's precisely what makes the three programs reviewed here a feasible option when deciding which winner to back.

One point to bear in mind about these programs, and one which each takes great pains to mention, is the fact that constant use and detailed planning are essential to get the most from each. The PCW is merely a number and data cruncher when it comes to racing and an element of native intelligence is required.

BRIMARDON FORMULA PLUS

£35 ● Brimardon Computer Racing Service ● 0325 288483

Due to the fact that we are now out of the National Hunt season (or 'over the sticks' to use the appropriate jargon) we have decided to concentrate on Brimardon's flat racing package. To say that the package is comprehensive is putting it lightly. The main program and subsidiary files can be listed and tinkered with, so if you feel that you have made some improvements, then get in touch with Brimardon.

```
NAME OF HORSE                          ? Pluser's Delight
AGE OF HORSE (2,3,4,5,6 or 0)          ? 4
DAYS SINCE LAST RACE                   ? 12
FORM FIGURES in last two runs - most recent first (use 1,2,3,4,0)
                      last race        ? 1
                race before last       ? 2
NUMBER OF RACES RUN THIS SEASON        ? 7
COURSE WINNER - y/n                    ? y
DISTANCE WINNER - y/n                  ? y
BEATEN FAVOURITE - y/n                 ? n
SURNAME OF TRAINER                     ? S Bradley
WEIGHT - in stones and pounds
                          STONES       ? 10
                          POUNDS       ? 0
BEST SPEED FIGURE (add .1 if last years figure)
                                       ? 67
```

The Brimardon Formula Plus. The company also provide a National Hunt system for £25 but the season of the sticks is over now. The screen shown here illustrates entry of horse data

Taxing news

When you make your first trip to the betting shop, after cutting through the smoke to make your wager you will be asked whether of not you want to pay tax. Pay it! 10% tax on a £1.00 bet works out a lot cheaper than 10% tax on a £200 win. If you lose, well you'll only have paid out about 10p.

For those unacquainted with the intricacies of racing, this piece of software is an ideal teacher. For example, the detailed documentation tells you that there is little or no point in rating horses early on in the season because they will not have established any form.

The Brimardon Formula pivots on what is called the horse's Speed Factor or SF. This information can be obtained from the Raceform Handicap Book (published every Thursday and costing 95p). This gives the best SFs for horses officially rated at over 30, the course on which the race was run and the going. A horse without such an SF rating is either not worth betting on or, if early in the season, a bit of a dark horse! Entering the required data is simple enough. Armed with your *Racing Post* or *Sporting Life* you are asked where the race is to take place. You are also asked to note the 'going' – it is a good idea to get this detail on the morning of the meeting unless the course is All Weather. Next, what type of race is it? Initially, the going is complex here; you have to hack your way through a veritable rain forest of terminology – Maiden Stakes, Novice Handicap and more. Bear with it – this information is important to your assessment of the runners. Distance is next and you will soon be doing furlong to mile conversions in your sleep (by the way there are 8 furlongs to a mile). The value of the race is also noted.

Lester, pick it

Once you have entered these basic details, it is time to move onto the horses themselves. Details needed here are the age of the horse, how long since its last race, the position in its last three races (this does not take into account the fact that a horse may have been pulled up).

You will then need to input the name of the trainer – there is a separate list of trainers which it is a good idea to keep updated. Weight is the next step (now here's a funny thing, we spent at least ten minutes trying to work out how much a horse might weigh until we realised that the weight referred to the jockey). The Speed Figure or SF comes next and then the meeting at which it took place.

Once you have fed it all in, the computer will analyse the data and you will be presented with a rating for the horses you entered (you do not need to enter them all for assessment). This is accompanied by 'Veto Messages' which basically tell you what you should already know – that the distance of the chosen race is one furlong over that of the horse's best SF, for example.

Once you have the rating, it is up to you to decide whether or not to back the horse. No computer program can make use of good old human initiative and ratings are merely guidelines – after all who thought that Desert Orchid would not win the Gold Cup? Generally, the Brimardon Formula is an excellent package with good customer support from the company. It asks all the right questions, doesn't nanny you ... and the results were not half bad either. ●

Brimardon Formula Plus

Pluses
- ▲ Right questions asked
- ▲ Trainer and horse file
- ▲ Can be customised

Minuses
- ▼ Data input not easy to change

Ease of use	4/5
Documentation	4/5
Features	4/5
Performance	4/5
8000 Plus Value Verdict	16/20

COURSEWINNER

£19.95 ● Intraset ● 02572 76800

Coursewinner differs radically from the Brimardon package in as much as it concentrates more on betting than form assessment. In the latter case it must be said that the program is fairly weak. The first few pages of the manual deal exclusively with types of bets and betting tax. You are taken through such marvels as the Heinz bet (57 bets which need six selections, 15 doubles, 20 trebles, 15 four times, 6 five times and 1 six timer). Classic bets such as the Yankee (11 bets) and the Canadian (26 bets) are also included. This is certainly a good selling point but appears to miss the main point that you cannot bet on anything which you haven't yet assessed; if you do, you're looking for trouble.

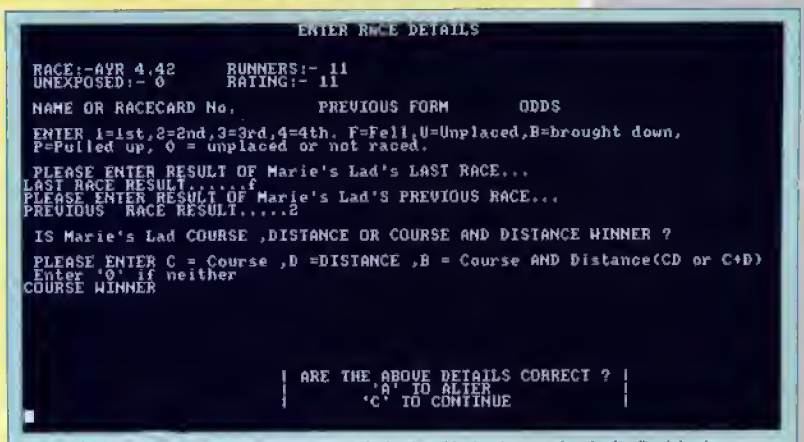
Coursemaster also comes with what the programmers call a 'Betting Bank'. This is a cache of cash which, as Intraset so rightly say, you "can afford to lose. If you can't afford to lose it, don't bet". The Coursemaster Betting Bank is basically a way of handling that money using the PCW as banker. Intraset recommend that you use this in conjunction with a bookmaker's account.

As for the actual horse racing, or rather the form analysis, the program is far from strong on this – not for beginners or those among our readers with a love of the sport (and the stats). Taken as its base theory, Coursemaster revolves around the previous form of horses. This, at first sight, appears to be a logical theory and certainly one which will stand you in good stead; after all, if a horse crosses the finishing line in one of the first four positions in its last four or five outings, there is a fair chance that it will do the same on the day of your choosing.

Out by a head

What this form of analysis does negate however, are the more subtle factors such as the reason why a particular horse finished well in its last race when facing extremely stiff competition or that a horse with poor form can come from a well thought-of stable having been trained well with a good jockey. Of course, these subtleties are up to you to divine and it could be said that the program merely gets rid of the base data leaving you free to concentrate on the more interesting angles.

To make up for this lack of detail, any race you have entered can be saved to disc. In effect this allows you to build up a database of courses, horses, trainers and jockeys. It would be a healthy addition to the program to be able to take separate horse details and include these in further race cards. Of course this would not take into account the current going, trainer and jockey form on the day as well as a host of other details the discovery of which adds to the fun. ●



Coursewinner from Intraset concentrates more on the betting side than horse racing details. Don't let that put you off though; it's a solid enough program. Here we see the horse details being entered

Coursewinner

Pluses
- ▲ Save race details to file
- ▲ Good explanation of betting

Minuses
- ▼ Does not take jockeys into account
- ▼ Doesn't consider favoured going

Ease of use	4/5
Documentation	3/5
Features	3/5
Performance	4/5
8000 Plus Value Verdict	14/20

Late extra

Even though it might be appealing to fill in all the details you can find about a race as early as possible, try to hold yourself back. There is no point in rating a horse which prefers firm going if it rains heavily overnight. Also there is little to be gained by putting all the horse form down if the horse is declared as a non-runner on the morning of the meeting ... and what happens if is jockey is injured the night before? All of this wastes your time and will eventually disenchant you with the programs. If possible make use of CEEFAX or TELETEXT.

PROPUNTER

£39.00 ● DGA/CODA ● 061 3300184

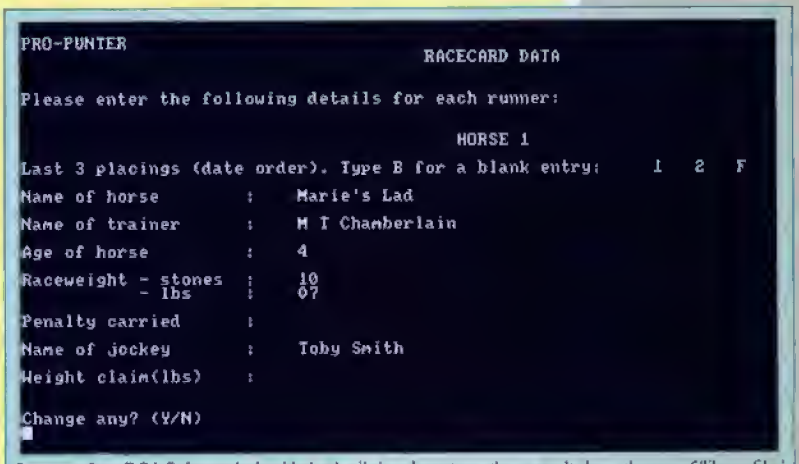
Propunter makes use of 'Library discs': these are basically formatted (by you) discs to which information is saved. As with the other programs, you will need to have *The Racing Post* to hand for details such as the last three outings of the horse, whether or not the horse is a coursewinner (in fact for information such as that, or whether the horse has won over the distance you will either need to be well into the season or have a form book to hand).

Propunter does require the skills of either a very quick learner or a punter with past form. When questions such as 'Is there any allowance for apprentice claims' hit you for the first time, then you know that no fence is being left unjumped by this program.

Before we go any further into this review, we should just mention the fact that when inputting the data for one race of 12 horses a 'Subscript out of range ' error message cropped up and crashed the program five times. Unfortunately, the program only actually saves data to disc once all the horses have been input rather than horse by horse and this meant that the data for the preceding ten horses was lost. Happily, DGA will replace faulty discs. The meat of the program lies in the data input which requires at least one weekly racing paper or a preternaturally good memory. The trainer and jockey tables for example are a racing person's dream. Data input is carried out over a number of stages; the first deals with trainers and jockeys, and the winner of last year's race – this should include the age of the horse, the position in the forecast, its trainer and the starting price (SP).

Favourite things

The next stage deals with the race itself. Each horse is entered with its past three outings – happily you are able to tell the program whether the horse was pulled-up, whether it fell and so on. Because Propunter can handle Flat and National Hunt you may find slightly different questions cropping up to deal with different meetings. Once all the stages are completed, and there are many more than space allows us to mention, it's time for the analysis of data. A 12 horse race can be rated in a matter of seconds. Messages tell you whether the rated horses have inflated odds or are a good bet. Generally, and aside from the glitch, Propunter has a great deal going for it ... and the results we obtained were very reasonable ●



Propunter from DGA Software deals with the details in a down-to-earth manner. It also makes use of 'library files' to which race data can be saved. This shot shows those horse details which might make you a pound or two

Propunter

Pluses
- ▲ Very detailed
- ▲ Use of Library discs well explained

Minuses
- ▼ Easy to lose data
- ▼ Crashed

Ease of use	4/5
Documentation	4/5
Features	4/5
Performance	3/5
8000 Plus Value Verdict	15/20

Info a penny

All the information you need is easily to hand in the racing press – it's best not to use the daily papers as they can be inaccurate.

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Trading Places

Sophie Lankenau finds that changing her mind doesn't have to be a nuisance with LocoScript 2's Find and Exchange facilities

If you use LocoScript 2 to repeatedly produce a document which varies only slightly, in terms of basic structure and content, each time you use it, then the program's Find and Exchange facility is extremely useful. Changes in a legal document such as a Will require the retention of fundamental details, but demand alterations to information such as name, beneficiary and bequests. Finding and Exchanging in LocoScript 2 removes the necessity of rewriting documents like these, in favour of inserting particular details with the minimum of effort.

For the purpose of the exercise, we will make changes to a Will such as the one mentioned above. If, however, you use LocoScript 2 to produce memos or circulars, the same principles apply. The first step is to summon the document to the screen, locating it on the disc management screen with the cursor keys and pressing [E] for **'edit'.**

Home, sweet home

The Find facility allows you to search for occurrences of a particular word, part of a word, or a phrase in the document text. In this way, the cursor is endowed with a kind of homing instinct – it will skip through the text, alighting upon the information it has been asked to locate like a pigeon coming back to roost. To set the cursor off on this mission, make sure that it is positioned above the first occurrence of the word in question; the Find facility carries out a forward search, so to be safe, you are best advised to start at the beginning of the document.

Press [FIND] to the right of the [f7] key. A drop menu will appear, with a space (which can take up to 30 characters), for the 'Find text' to be keyed in (see screenshot 1). Beneath that, notice three search commands. **Ignore case** tells LocoScript to identify a word, for example, 'and' in any combination of capital or lower case letters. In this kind of search, LocoScript will pick out 'AND' 'And' or 'and'.

Look for whole words instructs the program to find only whole words, so that occurrences of the letter sequence 'and' will not be picked up from words such as 'hand' or 'understand' or the name 'Sandra'. Say you want to find all occurrences of the word 'disc', irrespective of whether it's spelt with a 'c' or 'k' on the end of the word. At this point select the **Use wild cards** option and, when entering the Find text, key in 'dis?'. This will track down all occurrences of either 'disc' or 'disk'.

Similarly, you might wish to find a word that people either have trouble remembering or have great difficulty in spelling correctly. For example you could want to locate all mentions of the surname 'Lankenau' in a particular document. When entering the 'find text', simply type in something like **L***, **Lank***, **Lanken*** (to narrow it down as far as possible) and the program will dutifully search for all words conforming to the format entered. The more letters you can remember (or spell) accurately, the quicker the program will be able to track down all mentions of the word. The wildcard * will replace more than one letter; ? merely replaces one.

Test drive

To see these commands in practice, clear the **Find text** space (if necessary) by selecting it with the cursor arrow keys, and pressing [-]. Now type in the word you want to find – in our example, 'will'. Press [ENTER] and the **Find next** command at the bottom of the drop menu will be implemented automatically. The cursor works its way through the text, settling upon the first character of the predetermined sequence of letters wherever it occurs – the first discovery is 'goodwill', and the cursor alights on the 'w'.

Now call up the 'Find' menu again, and decide whether you want the search for 'will' to continue. We do, so press [ENTER], and watch further examples being highlighted. In this case, the program selects 'will', 'willow' and 'willing', but excludes 'Will', since it has not been told to ignore case (see screenshot 2).

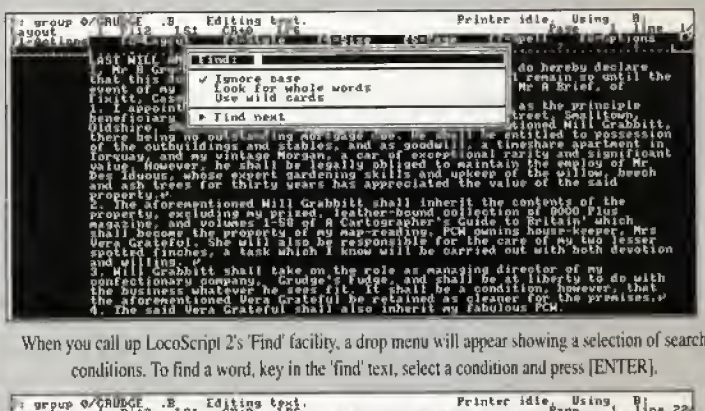
We want to be less exclusive in our exploration, by ignoring case. Call up the 'Find' menu once more, and, retaining 'will' as the 'Find text', select this option using the down arrow key. Confirm the selection by pressing [+] to the left of the space bar. [ENTER] sets the cursor off on its journey, and by repeating the sequence above (calling up the Find menu and pressing [ENTER]), the cursor will pick out all the examples from the previous exercise, together with any variations of capital and lower case letters.

Whole in one

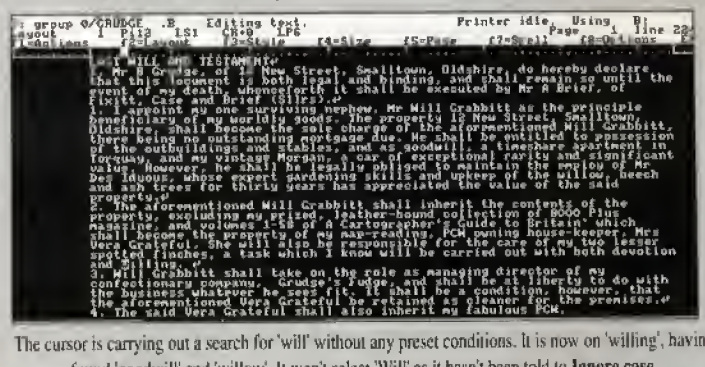
Now we need to find examples of **Whole words** in the document. Remove the previous search command (**Ignore case**) by selecting it with the down arrow key, and pressing [-] to the right of the spacebar. Move down to the new command, **Look for whole words**, and press [+] to tick the instruction. Press [ENTER], and watch the cursor carry out a different search, ignoring 'will' in words like 'willow' and 'willing' but picking out both 'will' and 'Will'.

The facility to **Use wild cards** allows you to check up on occurrences of words with the same number of letters, but a variable last letter. In the document that we've created, the main beneficiary is called Will Grabbitt. With the proliferation of the letter sequence 'will', we might want to check that when the beneficiary's name occurs, it is spelt correctly. To do so, change the 'Find text' to 'wil?', and go through the search options, placing a tick

Go fetch!



When you call up LocoScript 2's 'Find' facility, a drop menu will appear showing a selection of search conditions. To find a word, key in the 'find' text, select a condition and press [ENTER].



The cursor is carrying out a search for 'will' without any preset conditions. It is now on 'willing', having found 'goodwill' and 'willow'. It won't select 'Will' as it hasn't been told to **Ignore case.**

([+]) by each one. Press [ENTER], and the cursor will find all examples of the letter sequence 'wil' with a variable fourth letter where it occurs. For example, if there were words such as 'wild' and 'wilt' in the text, they would be selected, and you could then check for spelling.

It's a fair swap

Finding words is only half the task. The **Exchange** facility is an extension of 'Find', but with the added ability to interchange words or phrases where necessary. For example, in our document, Will Grabbitt is the main beneficiary. Say the testator, (the person whose will it is) has a sudden change of heart, and decides that his fortune will be safer in the hands of his trusty friend Vera Grateful. The solicitor needs to substitute the now poorer Mr Grabbit with the new beneficiary, Vera.

With the document on screen, and the cursor at the start of the text, call up the 'Exchange' menu by pressing [SHIFT][FIND]. The 'Find' area is for the existing word or phrase – in our case, Will Grabbitt, and the space marked 'Exch' is for the substitution, whom we know to be Vera Grateful (see screenshot 3). You will notice three familiar search options, (**Ignore case**, **Look for whole words** and **Use wild cards**) and an additional one, **Preserve case**. The function of this command is to ensure consistency, especially where names are concerned. For example, if our 'Find' word is 'Will' and the 'exchange' word is 'vera', the program will automatically convert the lower case 'v' in 'vera', to the correct capital 'V' when case is preserved.

To change the main beneficiary using LocoScript 2's Exchange facility, type in the Find and Exch names indicated above. Select **Preserve case**, and move down to the **Manual** or **Automatic** exchange options at the foot of the drop menu. The important difference between the two is that **Automatic** exchange will order the cursor to dash through the document, deftly finding and exchanging every example of the designated word or phrase. To demonstrate the enthusiasm of the **Automatic** exchange, select that option and press [ENTER]. The cursor sets off on its mission, finding and exchanging vigorously, and making Will a thing of the past, and Vera an extremely wealthy person (see screenshot 4)

Down boy, down!

To quell the ruthlessness of this command, LocoScript offers two alternatives. You can halt proceedings by hitting the [STOP] key on the top left of the keyboard. If you choose this option, you have to observe the proceedings quite closely since the cursor travels at some considerable speed . A sudden press of the [STOP] key can be a completely arbitrary affair, with no guarantee of accuracy. There is another, more precise way of introducing some order into the search. Return the cursor to the start of the document, and select the Exchange menu with ([SHIFT][FIND]). Swap the **Find** and **Exch** names over – (LocoScript has removed Will Grabbitt from the document so there will be nothing to 'find' if you keep the order as it is) and select **Automatic exchange**. Instead of pressing [ENTER], choose the [PARA] key to the far right of the keyboard. The search begins, but this time progressing a paragraph at a time, so that you can keep a check on the proceedings. To work through the document in this way involves simply returning to the 'Exchange' menu and reiterating the command. Another variation of the automatic exchange is to substitute [PAGE] for either [ENTER] or [PARA]. The search is then carried out a page at a time.

Share it out!

These aspects of the Automatic exchange facility are going to be very useful for our document, as we will now discover. The testator has had yet another change of heart, and has decided not to write Will Grabbitt completely out of the Will – he is going to receive a small portion of the fortune after all. By checking the document a paragraph or page at a time, and making substitutions where necessary, we can be sure that Will receives some of the smaller items to which he was originally entitled (perhaps he isn't so bad after all). This will involve calling up the exchange menu once more, and swapping the find text with the exchange text. Repeat the controlled, paragraph by paragraph search, and Mr Grabbitt will be gradually reinstated as the lucky recipient of a few of Mr Grudge's worldy goods.

Keeping your hand in

The version of the Automatic exchange facility explained above is slightly more thorough; however, our example text is a legal document, where accuracy is of paramount importance. By selecting **Manual exchange**, you are able to work systematically through the document, 'authorising' the substitutions as you go, occurence by occurence. Although this is more time-consuming than an Automatic exchange, it ensures a greater attention to detail. It could, for example, reduce the possibility of the main benefactor receiving 'A Cartographer's Guide to Britain' instead of 'A Car of exceptional rarity and significant value.'

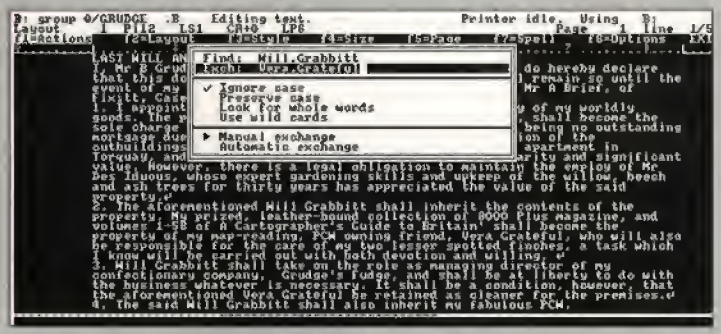
The manual exchange facility progresses with screen prompts, so that after every identification of the 'find' text, you are offered the chance to either make the exchange, by pressing [+], continue until the next occurrence without exchanging ([-]), or abandon the exercise by pressing [CAN] for **CANcel** (see screenshot 5).

If the menu is obscuring the part the document which needs to be checked, either press the key in the centre of the arrow keys, or wait; both courses of action will see the the menu text transferred to the top of the screen. Once you have been through the document allocating and taking away Mr B. Grudge's possessions, press [EXIT] and select **Finish edit**.

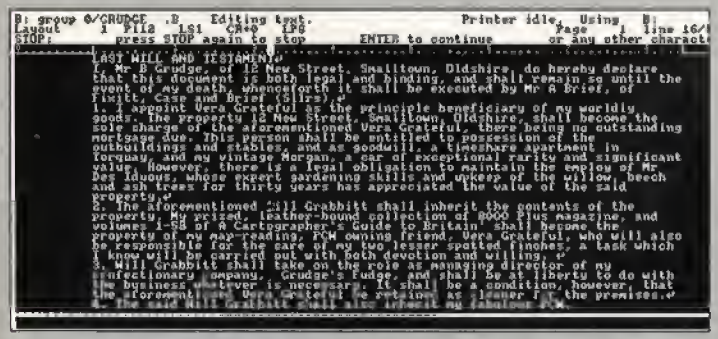
The Find and Exchange facility can be a godsend, particularly if you are a solicitor with a client like Mr Grudge. In more general day to day use, however, this is a feature of LocoScript 2 which will alleviate much of the labour involved in altering seemingly simple information. It can be applied to anything from a simple letter or memo, to lengthier documents such as a contract of employment or a stock control sheet for a shop.

Changing factual details such as times, dates or addresses, will be transformed from a messy, panic-ridden scramble, to the very simplest of operations. ●

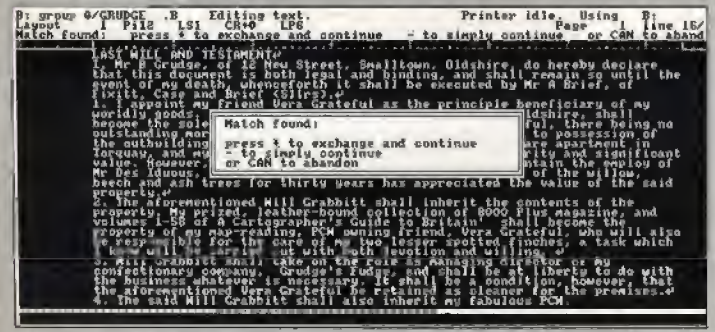
Bring on the substitutions!



The Exchange menu appears, with two highlighted spaces. The **Find** text is the one which is hunted down; the **Exch** text instructs LocoScript to replace every instance of Will Grabbitt with Vera Grateful.



One way to quell the ruthlessness of the automatic exchange is to press the [STOP] key, and check that all exchanges are valid. This is a somewhat arbitrary course of action, with no guarantee of accuracy.



Legal documents require the utmost precision, so carrying out a manual exchange is worth the extra time. The menu shows you your options once each occurrence of the find text is located.

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£44.95 ● Bible Society Software ● 0793 513713.

Committing books to computer-disc medium might sound like a rather pointless idea. After all, there is surely less eye-strain to be suffered from gazing at a soft-back copy of the New Testament than from spending hours at your PCW screen. However, straight reading is all very well for a book which you might only ever look at once or twice in a lifetime; but for one which, to millions of people, holds great religious insights and to others is an immense work of literary reference, more than straight reading and pen -paper notation is required.

We are well aware from our PostScript mailbag that many of our readers are clerics. Sermon writing is no easier than any other type of written work and, in some cases, is much more difficult. How much easier it would be for them to be able to find a few references to topics such as 'forgiveness', have the quotes printed out and the entries saved to disc at the press of a few keys.

Of course it's not merely vicars, nuns, priests and padres who have need or desire for this form of reading. As we have already mentioned, the Bible is a source of study, reference and everyday reading for millions of people.

Bibliotec takes its text from what is known as the *Good News Bible* (abbreviated to GNB in the program). This is a translation, developed in the United States by the American Bible Society (in 1966 as a matter of interest). Its aim is to put the New Testament into a form of 'everyday' English.

In the beginning

Bibliotec is not for 8256 owners whose machines have not yet had a drive and memory upgrade. A full 256k of memory is required in order to store the program and ancillary files in the M: drive. These files come on CF2DD (double density) discs which can only be run from a B: drive. The program does in fact take over the entire memory; the start-up process (don't worry, it is very straightforward indeed) clears your M: drive for you and loads the required program files. You are then asked to insert the second of the Bibliotec discs – this one contains the text itself.

Although Bibliotec will not run on an 8256 it will run on both the 9512 and 8512. In the case of the 9512, a small installation process is required but this is merely in order to set up the daisywheel printer. In effect, once you have made copies of the discs using **DISCKIT.COM** and have set up a PROFILE.SUB file, you can be using Bibliotec ten minutes after unwrapping it.

The first screen which greets you has three elements; at the top of the screen is a white on black (or green on black) logo telling you the name of the program; beneath this, you will see information telling you of the present status of the program's many functions. This is when the realisation dawns upon you that you have got yourself into a very fine piece of software indeed.

One of the many useful functions, for example, is the use of 'wildcards' (CP/M users will be familiar with these in the form of *s and ?s. Under CP/M, wildcards are used to speed up commands such as DIR or PIP because instead of having to look for each individual file with a .COM suffix you merely type DIR *.COM) Bibliotec uses a similar wildcard system to speed up word searches.

We will go into the rest of the options in detail at a later point in this review; for the moment it should be said that the Bibliotec manual will guide you through the use of the program with ease and without having to consult it again and again in order to clarify a point.

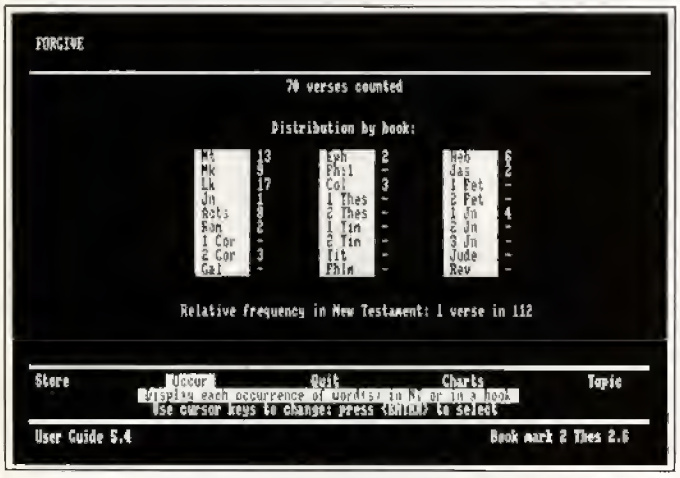
Seek and you shall find

The main purpose of Bibliotec is to get to specific pieces of the Good News Bible quickly and easily. There is hardly any point in having a piece of software which acts as a piece of text unless this is the case, and happily – unlike some text-lead programs – Bibliotec does an excellent job of it.

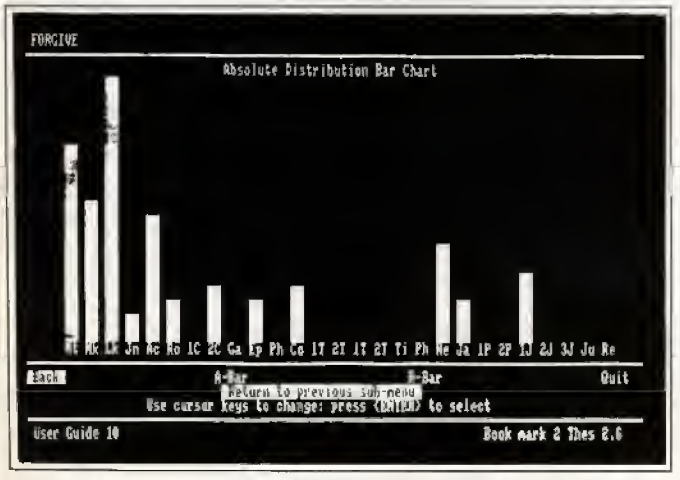
Your first option is to find what the programmers call a Good News word. This searching process is not a simple case of the program scanning every word in the text and then returning with the required references. The search actually looks through the concordance. This means that words such as 'the', 'it' and 'if' can be passed over, saving time. It also means that the search is carried out in memory (or to be pedantic, on the M: drive) – where the concordance is stored – this makes even a quite detailed search, say for the word *Lord*, for which there are bound to be a great many references, very fast indeed. Normally only a few seconds pass before the quarry is tracked down.

If the specific word for which you are looking is not to be found, then an automatic search is made of words beginning with the same first few letters. For practical purposes, this would seem to be a pointless act – for example, you might be

Finding your way to the truth



The word 'forgive' crops up quite a few times in the New Testament. Bibliotec can show you just how many times - 17 in Luke, for example. It also informs of you the frequency per verse



Reading statistics is no great pleasure, so the program produces information in bar chart form as well. This one shows the number of times the word 'forgive' crops up in the New Testament

looking for a word such as 'carrot' (as in 'carrot and stick') and come up with 'cart', or 'carrier'. Far from being a waste of time, this gives the same kind of feeling as the fatal habit of looking through a dictionary instead of going directly to the spelling you require. You know the kind of thing; you begin by checking on the spelling of the word 'microprocessor' and come across 'middelskot' (a South African word for payment to a farmers' cooperative). This does nothing for your spelling but can be vastly interesting. The same is true of this search process in Bibliotec. In effect, you get a kind of computer lead, random ideas and inspiration generator thrown in for free! When the program does present you with the word that you're looking for, you are then, of course, given another set of options.

Freedom of choice

The concordance stores words along with their book, chapter and verse numbers. It also stores them under 'theme' headings and with sets of related words or topics.

This is where using a computer program really does leave a straightforward piece of text behind. A thought should be borne in mind, however, especially for those of our readers who might want to use the program as part of a serious comparative theological study; the relations between the words have been worked out by the Bible Society and, as such, some of the inclusions and exclusions may jar on you slightly.

So, you have found your key word and have related this to others thematically. The next thing to do is to go to that word and read the text itself. Bibliotec also presents you with some statistical data to make finding the most relevant text that bit easier. You probably will not want to use every reference to a particular word but will be more inclined to make use of those parts of the New Testament which contain the most references.

The program provides two bar charts to help you find this. One such chart is called A (for 'absolute'); this gives the total number of times a word appears in each of the 27 books. Some of the books are much longer than others however; this is dealt with by the R-Bar chart which shows the relative distribution of words. So while one word might crop up five times in Luke and four times in Jude, Jude is the shorter book but contains relatively more references and hence is likely to be closely concerned with that word.

Having decided which section of text to go to, you bring up a list of the books in which your chosen word appears. You use the arrow keys to move the cursor over the book (and chapter) title, press [ENTER] and in a matter of seconds you are taken to a page of text.

Let there be highlights

The specific verse you require will be highlighted within the text so that you can find it without having to hunt through a number of verses. But, as with everything in Bibliotec, there are also heaps of other options. You are given the option of going straight to the next appearance of your word ; you can also browse through the chosen book, page by page, backwards and forwards. This feature is only to be expected from a good, text-led, piece of software. What are the added attractions?

Well, your PCW printer can become a jotter for you. Each of the highlighted sections of text can be printed out (not merely screen dumped) at a flick of the cursor and press of the [RETURN] key. This facility could well be a boon to the priests, preachers, deacons, vicars and maybe even Archbishops among our readers.

The really powerful element is yet to come however. So far you will have had to have gone through a few search routines to find your required text; you won't want do to this every time you want to find the same piece. The people who designed and programmed Bibliotec obviously realised this; in fact, the whole program has the feel of having been put together by people who have encountered the problems which the programming aims to vanquish. This is opposed to software which has been developed merely from vanity or from a desire to 'fill a gap in the market'. The solution provided is simple and makes excellent use of the PCW; you save your chosen texts, bar-charts, references and jottings to disc files which can be called up quickly at a later date.

Comments and text can be saved directly to ASCII files which can then be inserted into LocoScript or Protext and thence to sermons, reports, theses or study notes.

Each of these files can include your own comments and marginal notes. Without going wildly over the top about this facility and its ease of use, it must be said that the PCW, let alone those people who use the Good News Bible, has been crying out for such an 'intelligent' system as this for many, many years.

If you want to save the bar charts or references to books – the charts cannot be saved as ASCII – then you have access to 'System files'. These basically save the screen memory to what are called Stores. You have two stores which are initially saved to memory. What won't surprise you by now is the fact that these stores also come with separate menus and options.

For example, you can Match (compare) the information in one with that in the other, you can swap stores, and view them on screen. The only problem, and it is a small problem which is quickly overcome after a few hours of use, is the fact that it is easy to over-write the stores.

Revelations

Two pages, and a lack of Biblical knowledge on the part of this reviewer, really isn't enough space to go into the qualities of this program. Its uses are manifold and its ease of use is unsurpassed.

The subject matter is obviously not on review here, but even for a 'journo' who usually sets little store by such matters, the program was a genuine pleasure to use, and, probably unsurprisingly, an informative one at that.

The traditional 8000 Plus test of not using the manual for the first half an hour of a review session in order to see how intuitve and easy a program is to use was passed with flying colours.

The manual is professionally produced, comes with both an index and a glossary and little or no computer knowledge is assumed of the user. Overall, Bibliotec comes with a genuine recommendation. The options are myriad including saving to disc files, typing to printer, adding your own comments to files, quick searches, statistical analysis, bar charts; the list goes on and on and on. ●

Bibliotec

Pluses
- ▲ Write to file
- ▲ Quick searches
- ▲ Excellent manual

Minuses
- ▼ Not for 8256 owners

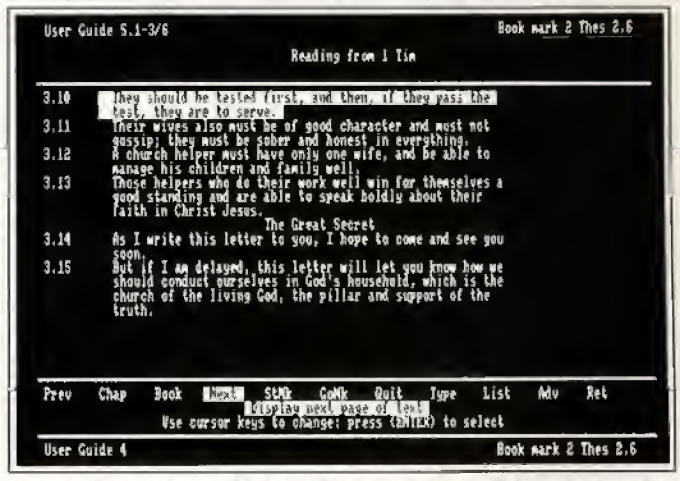
Ease of use	5/5
Documentation	5/5
Features	5/5
Performance	5/5
8000 Plus value verdict	20/20

Who's sorry now?

During the period in which this review was written the Soviet Union not only decided to open up the archives on its less than salubrious Stalinist past and apologise to its own people, it also decided to make amends to the rest of the world. One of these historical olive branches was a payment of some few thousands of pounds made by the Kremlin to the Bible Society. The rubles were handed over in compensation for Bibles burnt during the Revolution. We'll have to see whether a unifed Germany does the same for the families of Brecht, Freud, Liebnitz and others. So, history proves that book burning, like other crimes, doesn't pay after-all.

And the word was ... forgive

Earlier we saw the number of appearances of the word 'forgive' in the New Testament; we now get to see some related words. These can then be sought out and used on their own



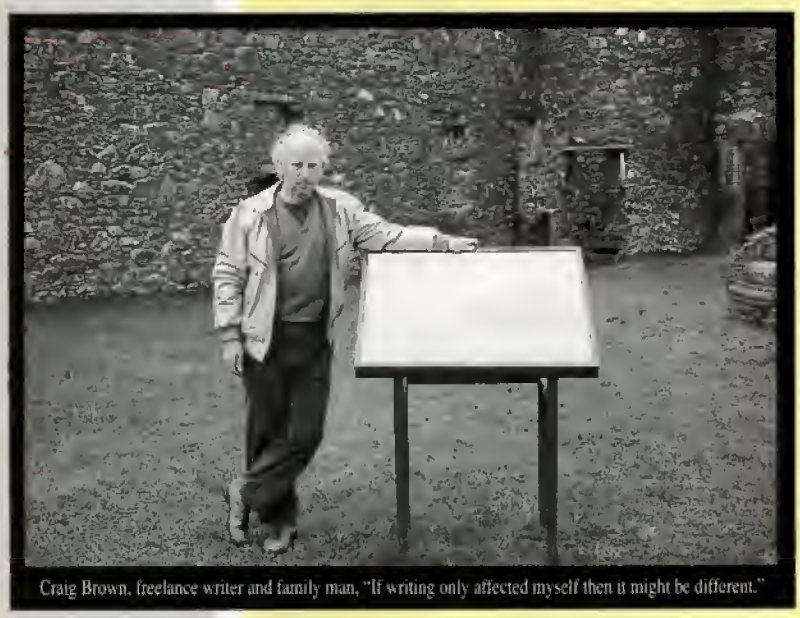
The point of the operation ... to find the text. Using a concordance (see 'Index we trust') speeds up the search no end. As you can see, the text is highlighted

Going it Alone

Three writers, of different types and at different stages in their writing careers, tell Mike Gerrard about the pitfalls and the pleasures of the freelance life

The old adage would have us believe that everyone has at least one book inside them. Nowadays this can be extended to include; one good radio play, a book of poetry, a collection of short stories and maybe even a film script. With all this literature bursting to get out, it's a wonder that those poor publishers and literary agents aren't buried beneath a larger avalanche than the one which they currently have to deal with.

The reason for this lack of output might be that millions of people want to write and be published but are stopped by the mortgage repayments or simply shortage of time. But there are more routes to literary success than the stairs to a garret and penury. You can stick with the 'day-job' or take the plunge or maybe even both. Three people took up the challenge and this is how they are getting on.



Craig Brown, freelance writer and family man, "If writing only affected myself then it might be different."

Motoring on

Craig Brown is 43, and although it's now twenty years since he sold his first article (to the motoring press), writing for him is still very much a part-time occupation which must take second place to his job as marketing manager for a bookseller.

"I would like to write full-time if I thought I could make a go of it.", says Craig, "When you've a family and a mortgage you've got certain financial commitments and you have to meet those somehow. If it only affected myself then it might be different, but where it affects other people then it is just not so easy to do." But this is not simply a cop-out argument for someone who likes the idea of writing but lacks confidence in their own abilities. Craig comments, "I see myself as someone who has the potential to make a living as a writer – if you don't have faith in your own abilities, you may as well not bother."

Like many other part-time writers, Craig's main problem is lack of writing time, so a few years ago he determined to re-organise his days. One point to be borne in mind when stepping into new territory such as this is whether or not you have the time to re-organise in the first place. Some people just don't think that they have the time and will sacrifice their desire to write for this reason. Craig's answer to this is simple, "Often when you say you haven't time to do something,' he admits, "it's really just an excuse for not bothering."

Between 1986 and 1988 Craig wrote the first draft of a 120,000 word fantasy novel. In order to to do this, he had to make the time. This meant that he got up an hour earlier at weekends, and went to work earlier during the week, allowing him to write in the peace of his office for a couple of hours before the 'day-job' took over. This new regime was a wise move because, through his contacts in the motoring world, he was commissioned in 1988 to provide the text for a partly-photographic book on the Monaco Grand Prix. It meant writing 24,000 words in ten weeks.

"I'd been writing for the motoring press," Craig says, "since about 1969/70, which was the first time I had something published, and the first time I took writing remotely seriously. I'd written short stories before, but never got anywhere with them, and I remember at school when other kids reluctantly did their homework, I'd happily write English essays even when they weren't set."

In 1969 an American friend who was inundated with work asked Craig to help out, so he got into print by the unusual route of contributing to American magazines like Car Collector. Since then he's continued to write about cars and motorsports.

Because he writes at work, at home and sometimes on the move, Craig works mainly in longhand on A4 pads, transcribing his work later onto the Phillips Videowriter he uses at home. His fantasy novel is still in the process of being transcribed, which is a lengthy task as it involves editing as he types. He prefers not to use a word processor.

Longhand writing road

"I'm not very computer orientated," he admits. "At work we have a PCW9512, and when I use this all-singing, all-dancing machine, the operating of it gets in the way of what I'm writing.

For Craig at least, the computer interrupts the flow of thought. "I like things to be very simple," he says. " The Videowriter cost me much less than an Amstrad, so although you don't get the extra facilities of a full-blown word processor, (*or a home computer, spreadsheet or database to mention just a few - Ed.*) it's sufficient for my needs. Its only drawback is the small screen, and after a few hours of staring at that you do get eye-strain. Mind you, if my aspirations take flight and I get more involved in writing, I may well find myself having to buy something like a PCW."

Craig's ambitions lie in the world of fiction, as he doesn't want to be known as someone who only writes about cars. Despite his lack of success in that field so far, producing a work of successful fiction is probably his best hope of breaking into full-time writing.

Lack of time means that the amount of motoring journalism he can produce is limited, and so is the money he can expect to earn from it. The day-job is double-edged. It restricts his time but also gives him the freedom to write what he wants, with a guaranteed income behind him. ●

The Part-Time Person

When he was 13, Nick Warburton was asked at a school interview what he wanted to be when he grew up.

"I knew I wanted to be a writer," he says, "but I also knew that it wasn't a proper job so I couldn't say that. Instead I said that I wanted to be a journalist, which in fact I never wanted to be. There was no history of writing in my family background at all, although rumour has it that my uncle once gave up his job and bought a pipe, determined to become a writer, and of course all writers then smoked pipes, but I think it only lasted a week."

Nick says that he wrote at school in an Adrian Mole kind of a way, but never admitted to his family that he was a writer until he was doing it full-time: "there was something slightly shameful about it. There's no structure to the job, you don't become an apprentice, there's no pension and so on. How do you become a writer? You become a writer by actually being a writer, but the stage between starting out and eventually becoming one is a very marshy sort of area. I didn't actually call myself a writer until I'd had a radio play broadcast, and then I was happy to say that I was a writer...of radio."

It's a rare writer who achieves financial success immediately, and most start by generating a part-time income that eventually builds till they can take the risk and start writing full-time. Nick took a different approach. At the age of 33, without a single writing credit behind him, he gave up his teaching job, determined, like his uncle before him, to become a writer.

"I started with a clean sheet when I quit teaching," he says. "I sat down and thought, this is the start of a new career, so what shall I write? I did want to try different things, and I knew at some point that I wanted to write a novel – I still do – and that I wanted to try writing for children, but mainly I wanted to try writing as many different things as I could, partly so that I could find out what I could do."

The vague years

Nick was only able to take the plunge in this way because he was supported financially by his wife, Jennifer, also a teacher. She agreed to keep them for two years, while Nick tried his luck. It was a bold decision, and it paid off...eventually. In those two years Nick managed to sell one short story. A children's novel he wrote was rejected by several publishers before he gave up on it. He also began to enter the weekly literary competitions in *The Spectator* and *The New Statesman*, and began winning them fairly regularly; the £5 and £10 prizes on offer made up the bulk of the £400 he earned from writing in his first year.

"In those early days," he jokes, "I used to struggle to provide the bread and the milk. That was my contribution to the household. But I also learned that two years is a very short time in writing terms. If you write a novel and submit it you have to wait several months to get a response of any kind, and if it's just a rejection slip then you not only get the rejection but you don't learn anything from it. Two years can slip away very quickly like that. But then towards the end of those two years I had a radio play accepted, and that was just the kick I needed to make me feel that I should continue."

The play Nick wrote was called The *Colonel's Wife*, and it was accepted for the BBC's Thirty Minute Theatre in a rather strange manner. He sent the play off and then a few months later, with no intervening letter or phone call, a contract turned up in the post.

"It was extraordinary," he says, "but because this was the first thing which had been accepted, I thought this must be the way they do things. It isn't at all, normally. Then I didn't hear anything more from them for about a year – and that is the way they do things, I've discovered."

Radio fee Europe

The acceptance of the play boosted Nick's confidence. However, the next two he wrote were rejected and it was two years before any further success. He entered a play for The Radio Times Drama Competition, and admits that it was "a stunning surprise" when he heard that it had come joint first.

Nick Warburton always knew he wanted to write but was aware of the financial implications of starting out. "In those early days," he jokes, "I used to struggle to provide the bread and the milk"

His immediate reaction was not about the money, he says, but to find out whether it meant that the play would be broadcast.

"Of course the money did make a great practical difference. My share of the prize was £2000, so in one cheque I'd earned five times what my annual income had been and there was a little less pressure on me financially. Another advantage was that through talking to people at the BBC, I was able to get myself an agent, which I couldn't do before. My agent also managed to find a publisher for the children's novel that I'd written in my first year and been unable to sell."

Nick has since published several more children's books, some of which were recently sold to a paperback publisher. His radio plays have continued at the rate of about two a year, and have starred such people as Timothy West and Prunella Scales. He wrote a 90 minute play for Radio Three entitled *The Messenger*, and has contributed two plays to the 'Fear on Four' series, with more in the pipeline. He also bought himself a PCW.

"One of the things you have to experiment with when you start is what you're going to write with, which sounds a simple question but it's quite important. I know people who can only write with a pencil, for instance. I discovered that I needed to type, because the speed at which I think, which is very slow, is also more or less the speed at which I type. So I typed stuff, then corrected the manuscript, and retyped it all.

Ignition keyboard

"Then someone recommended that I try a word processor. I was a bit dubious to start with, but I have to say that it did make a big difference to the way I work. I'm still typing, so I enjoy that, and the speed of creation is exactly the same, but because it's easy to correct and change things now, I do masses of rewriting as I go along. That's something I always wanted to do when I was typing, but I felt that I couldn't because if you change a page and put in a bit more dialogue then that makes all the other pages wrong – is it worth it, you ask yourself. You shouldn't, but you do. With a word processor that doesn't apply."

After making many visits as a student on foundation writing courses, Nick was delighted to be invited to teach a course on Radio Drama this summer. His continued radio successes have also meant that he has been able to give up his part-time evening job as a librarian.

"As well as working in the evenings, when I started to write I also used to sell my own paintings and paperweights at the St John's Craft Market here in Cambridge. The chap at the next stall asked me what I did, so I said that I sold these part-time, and I worked in the library part-time, and I also wrote part-time. He said to me: 'Hmm, you're a bit of a part-time person, aren't you?' And I've never forgotten that. So I gave up the painting for a start, and eventually I gave up the part-time library job, so that just left the writing. But I've never forgotten this label that was hung over me of being a part-time person, and since then I've always struggled to avoid it." ●

Radio on

Getting a radio play accepted is one step along the way to literary stardom but how do you do it? We spoke to Shaun Maclaughlin, Senior Drama Producer for BBC Radio 4's drama centre in Bristol.

There are five other regional centres for BBC radio drama - Birmingham, Manchester, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Belfast. "Presentation is obviously important, single sheet paper with clear type, but quality of writing is the main thing. Our readers see about 10,000 scripts a year" said Shaun.

The BBC will be running a Young Playwrite's competition (15-30 year olds) next year, so that might be your chance. Send in your work now but be prepared for at least a six month lag between sending it off and receiving a reply.

Alison Brackenbury, award winning poet: "I'm actually against writing full-time. I think it's good to get your hands dirty and maintain your contact with the real world."

Poet's day

Alison Brackenbury's first collection of poems, *Dreams of Power* (£3.95,Carcanet Press, 1981), won her the Eric Gregory Award for poets under the age of thirty. This was followed by *Breaking Ground* (£4.95, Carcanet Press, 1984), and *Christmas Roses* (£4.95, Carcanet Press, 1988).

"The last two books didn't do as well as the first," Alison admits, "*Christmas Roses* got a good review in The Listener, where they said that I wasn't well-known but I deserved to be."

Poets have always been expected to live in a garret and starve, but they have little choice in the matter as only a very few well-known poets like Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney could ever hope to make a living from poetry alone. Others have to rely on giving readings, doing book reviews, working part-time and so on. Alison says, though, that she wouldn't want to write full-time even if she could.

"I couldn't spend all day writing poetry, you just couldn't do it for that length of time, but even if I were writing other things too I couldn't sit there for eight hours a day doing it. I like working as well. I'm actually against writing full-time, I think it's good to get your hands dirty and maintain your contact with the real world. One of the things that people say they like about my work is that it does have a lot of the 9 to 5 world in it, which not a lot of writing deals with.

"I got a good degree at Oxford but didn't want to be drawn into the academic world. I wanted to be out in the real world, and got a job as a librarian at a technical college, where I worked for seven years, mixing with all the engineering students and so on, and I loved it."

Earning curve

Since the birth of her daughter six years ago, Alison has been working part-time in Cheltenham, where she lives. The job is essential, not just because it's what she wants to do but also because her poetry couldn't possibly support her.

"Books might only sell about 600 copies," she says, "so book royalties don't go very far, and you don't get much for the publication of individual poems in magazines. You're reliant on giving readings for the rest of it, which I enjoy doing, although lately I've started turning down some of the ones in far-flung places like Northumberland."

Alison writes longhand in pencil, working quickly at first and then copying poems out time and time again, changing things in the process. The finished poems are then typed out. Alison says that she does keep on at her husband to get her a word-processor, though, for the convenience of being able to run off copies of finished poems rather than having to continually get them photocopied.

There is a career-structure of sorts for poets, a hierarchy which Alison says you must move up through.

"There are lots of little magazines run by enthusiasts who lose a lot of money but they back their own judgement and will publish you if they like your stuff rather than on the strength of what your name happens to be. You then have to move up to the more established magazines like *Agenda* and *PN Review*, and then on to having a collection published. My publisher actually noticed my work in *Agenda*. In my day it seemed fairly easy to get your work into these small magazines, but I gather it's a lot harder now and also the poetry market is shrinking; places like *The Listener* and *The New Statesman*, where I used to get things accepted, have now stopped publishing poetry."

Alison does write other things, and in 1985 the BBC broadcast a 30 minute radio play of hers called *Country of Afternoon*. Based on an Italian fairy story in which two men play chess to win a woman, in Alison's version she goes off with the wrong man. Two later radio plays have been turned down, however, and two children's books also remain unpublished. People often imagine that writers are either household names or abject failures, whereas the vast majority are somewhere in between.

Even though Alison is prized and published she is far from reaching millionaire status, "I only earn maybe about £400 a year from my writing," Alison says, and although she may never make a living from her poetry she continues to write what she wants to write: " it's a compulsion. I'd write whether I was successful or not. It's like having to explain something to someone, you just have to do it." She also earns more than the only other person in her family background who's ever been paid anything for writing: "my grandmother did get a guinea off the local squire once for writing good essays." ●

Conclusion

The main point to bear in mind here is obviously that you do not need to be a Pulitzer prize winner to be a writer. The majority of authors, playwrites and poets in this, or any other country, are the unsung heroes and heroines of literature. If you do decide to go it alone you should be aware of a few basic facts.

When sending in text to a potential publisher (or more likely an agent) keep a copy of the work for yourself. Don't be affronted if asked to re-write sections but equally, be prepared to stand your ground.

If you can, get hold of a copy of the *Writer's and Artist's Yearbook* for the current year. If not then your local library should have one. This will help you in picking the right publisher. For example, there is little point in sending your prized collection of poetry to Penguin or your Science Fiction epic to Faber and Faber. Above all, avoid vanity publishing - paying a publisher to have your works put in print.

The most important factor to keep close to your heart is that you can write. That novel is bursting to get out and you and your PCW are the right team to produce it.

Contact!

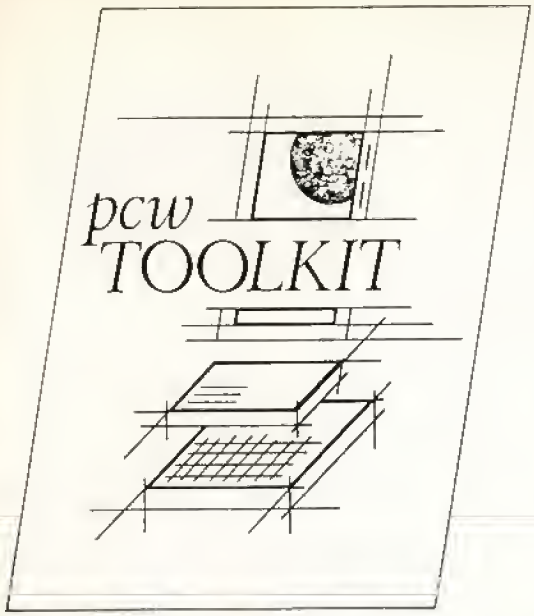
The addresses for the two magazines mentioned by Alison Brackenbury are as follows:

Agenda,
5 Cranbourne Court, Albert Bridge Road
London SW11 4PE

PN Review,
208-212 Corn Exchange Buildings
Manchester M4 3BQ

For more information about poetry writing and publication you might like to contact the Poetry Library in London. They will be able to provide you with a list of magazines and journals as well as a host of other useful information.

The Poetry Library,
South Bank Centre, Royal Festival Hall,
London, SE1 8XX.



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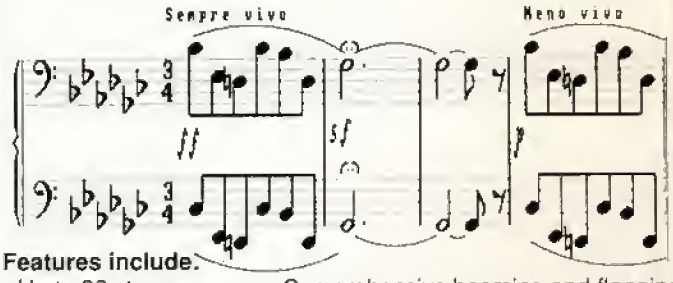

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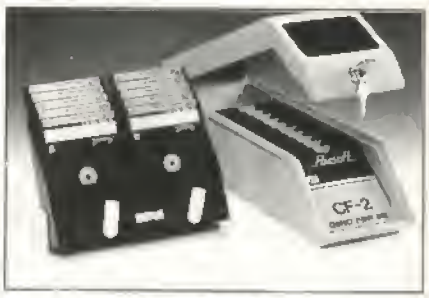

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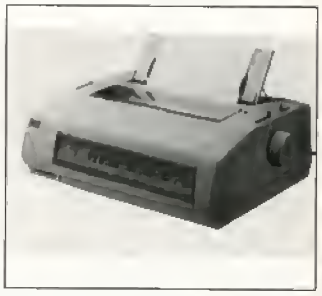

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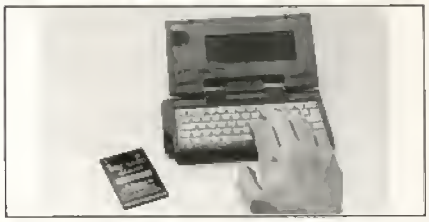

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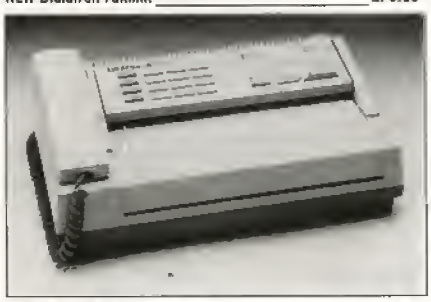

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Slave-Driver

David Gregg continues to get the most out of Mallard BASIC. This month: showing your PCW exactly who's boss

Getting a computer to do exactly what you want isn't always the easiest thing in the world. Last month I promised to show you how to design a rather special program using only the simplest of Mallard BASIC commands – without so much as a safety net or even a No.2 Meccano Set. Let's get going.

We'll start by writing down a list of everything we want our program to tackle. I would like to gear it around automatically running last month's BASIC memo-sending program (MEMOPROG.BAS). Put simply, what this did was to produce a run of identical, printed memos (held in an ASCII file called PLUSTEAM.MEM) and which said – *If you lot don't continue to work another sixty hours a week without extra pay then you're all fired* – for five people whose names (held in PLUSTEAM.NAM), bore a startling similarity to those of everyone on the 8000 Plus team. I will explain how it's done in such a way that those of you who have written suitable software of your own will be able to convert the code to get your own programs to run as well.

I will require my program to do the following things:

a) LOAD, RUN and INPUT instructions to other programs (like MEMOPROG.BAS just mentioned) on receiving a single command.
b) Show me, on screen, the contents of any file containing either names or a message (for example PLUS TEAM.NAM and PLUS TEAM.MEM) without me having to quit the program. It might also be helpful to get hold of instant hard copy of a text-file.
c) Await further orders, at the end of each operation, until receiving the command END.

It sounds like something out of a science fiction film, doesn't it? A 'Master Control Program' taking over your computer in front of your very eyes and carrying out a series of commands involving separately written software as if it had a life of its own! What's more, you can have it up and running in half an hour if you approach its construction in a reasonably professional manner.

From the top down

A serious software writer begins by attempting to map out the basic structure (a word which will soon be embossed upon your hearts) of the intended program before coding a single line. This has the important advantage of breaking the apparently mammoth task into smaller, more manageable fragments which can then be tackled and, usually, tested one at a time.

This is the structure of our slave program shown in four separate steps:

1. Initialise: set up the memory and the few variables required
2. Await commands from the user
3. Parse the latest command and carry it out if it makes sense. If not, print a rude message.
4. Go back to step 2 unless command END is encountered.

Not so fearsome-looking now, is it? You can see how confidence-boosting the exercise of breaking down program structure into small chunks (sometimes charmingly known as 'decomposition') can be. We could easily take the method a stage further by breaking each step down into progressively smaller ones until we virtually ended up with single lines of BASIC code. Absolute beginners at software programming are advised to do just that.

In this first draft, for example, you can see that **Step 3** is still not nearly detailed enough to code it straight off. So let's try 'decomposing' that one. It might end up like this, and I emphasise 'might' because, in programming, there are endless different ways of sucking cats, or do I mean swinging eggs? Anyway:

3, Parse latest command comes out for me as:
a) Extract first word of command.
b) Use this to pick the operation to carry out.
c) Extract vital information on the file(s) to use.
d) Execute the operation.
e) Return to Step 2 for the next thing

Got the idea? Let's look at how it's done.

Stringing it together

The full listing for SLAVE is to be found in the box below, so here is just a relevant slice for now.

Memo revisited

If you alter the final line of last month's "MEMOPROG" to read RUN"SLAVE" instead of END, when "MEMOPROG" ends, the new program, "SLAVE" will restart!

If you missed last month's article then the most crucial concept introduced involved instructing a program to automatically INPUT its instructions from a set of previously written plain text (ASCII) files. The program was a simple memorandum printer which would automatically look for and open a disc file called **AUTOFILE.MEM** containing something like the following:

PLUSTEAM.NAM (the names of the 8000 Plus team)
PLUSTEAM.MEM (a memo to go to these people). It could just as easily be **MEMBERS.NAM** (names of club members) and **FIXTURES.MEM** (a list of fixtures to go to these people)

The program would then print a copy of **PLUSTEAM.MEM** to all the names in the .NAM file. It would then go round again of its own accord and print a copy of **FIXTURES.MEM** to all the MEMBERS of the team.

Issue 44 contains a full listing and explanation of this program and can be obtained as a back issue.. You can order one by telephoning our Somerton office on 0458 74011.

DRIVING FORCE

This, then, is the program which will get your PCW to do what you want when you want. The first thing it does is to clear the screen and print its name - Slave v1.1 . Then it wants a command. Don't forget that it can only DISPLAY or PRINT files you have already created in RPED.BAS or a similar plain-text editor; you can even use LocoScript (if you make an ASCII file) - in fact any word processor which can produce ASCII can be used. You can, of course, change the frivolous captions by replacing the contents of each set of inverted commas with words of your own choice.

Be extra careful with the brackets () and if your program keeps rejecting these lines, check that you haven't missed one out or added one too many.

Good luck with this program and if you're stuck and keep getting crashes (typing errors will happen) check your typing against the possible mistakes mentioned on the Listings Plus pages at the back of the magazine.

```
10 REM SLAVE PROGRAM
20 GOSUB 500:REM Step 1: Initialisation
30 GOSUB 750:REM Step 2: Await Command
40 GOSUB 1000:REM Step 3: The Parser
50 GOTO 30:REM Step 4:Go back to Step 2
500 REM INITIALISATION
510 cls$=CHR$(27)+CHR$(69)+CHR$(27)+CHR$(72)
520 DIM autofile$(100)
530 RETURN
750 REM AWAIT COMMAND
760 PRINT cls$
770 PRINT"SLAVE v 1.1":PRINT
780 INPUT"WHAT IS YOUR WILL, MASTER? ",command$
790 command$=UPPER$(command$)
800 RETURN
1000 REM THE PARSER
1010 IF command$=" "THEN command$="NOTHING":GOTO 1070
1020 IF command$="END" THEN PRINT cls$:END
```

1000 REM PARSER ROUTINE

Using **REM**ark statements is excellent programming practice. In six months' time you may want to adapt or improve this program and you'll have forgotten what does what, unless you use REMs (which are ignored by BASIC while running) to remind you.

The next two lines (1010 and 1020) trap the **END** command and blank entries (seen as two " "s with a space in the middle), but our primary aim for **Step 3a** is to extract the first word of the command such as *MEMO PLUSTEAM.NAM WITH PLUSTEAM.MEM*. Now brace yourselves, readers, part of line 1030 reads:

firstword$=LEFT$(command$,(INSTR(command$," ")-1))

Pardon?

This is your first lesson in the way you can combine several BASIC functions and operators into a single, special function of your very own. Let's take it apart: **firstword$** is the 'variable name' we are going to use for the first word of the command (in this example it would be MEMO). The computer has just been given this and has stored it as the variable **command$**. The $ sign tacked onto a variable name tells BASIC that this is a 'string variable' and, hence, can contain alphanumeric characters (normally just letters and spaces but sometimes numbers too, provided they are not to be calculated).

Search party

LEFT$** might look like a variable but is, in fact, a built-in BASIC function the details of which you will find in the Mallard manual. Basically, **LEFT$ takes a string variable and extracts the number of characters required from its lefthand side, hence the name. It will be no great surprise, accordingly, to discover that functions called **RIGHT$** for the right-hand side and **MID$** for the middle exist too; you will find that I have made use of them in my full listing.

INSTR (which stands for 'in string') is another BASIC function which produces a number. This is the position of a particular 'search-string' (such as the letter 'A') in a whole string variable (such as **plAnt$**), counting from the left. In our program, **INSTR** will search for the first occurrence of a space (seen as " ") in **command$** and will tell us where it is. We then use that number to tell **LEFT$** how many characters to read.

–1 reduces this number of characters by one. If we didn't do this, then **LEFT$** would read the space as well.

Hopefully, you can now understand what we've done! Translated, with the BASIC functions written in capital letters, the line reads:

firstword$=THE LEFT HAND SIDE OF command$ UP TO BUT NOT INCLUDING the position of the first space

and so if **command$** was PRINT GERBILS.MEM then **firstword$** would be **"PRINT"**.

Look carefully at my use of brackets ( ). Some of them are not actually essential to making BASIC understand you but they serve to 'bracket off' complicated sections of the code into manageable chunks. The brackets around **INSTR(command$," ")-1**, for instance, remind you that the number of letters you require **LEFT$** to extract is equal to the position of the first space in command$ less one. In this way you can be in no doubt, nor can BASIC, as to where that **–1** is to be taken from.

Gosub yourself

That was **Step 3a** completed. **Step 3b** is far easier to follow at first sight. It is merely an index of possible contents for **firstword$** and tells the computer what is to be done when it finds a 'match':

```
1040 IF firstword$="PRINT" THEN GOSUB 2000
1050 IF firstword$="DISPLAY" THEN GOSUB 2500
1060 IF firstword$="MEMO" THEN GOSUB 3000
```

GOSUB is a 'command' which tells the program to jump to the line number referred to and follow the instructions from there on until it meets a line saying **RETURN**. It then 'returns' to the statement following the **GOSUB**. This is called a 'Sub-Routine'.

You can see the code for each of the options which deal with **Steps 3c** and **3d**, in the full listing. The "MEMO" option writes the AUTOFILE entries and then runs "MEMOPROG.BAS" from last month. The others behave as described earlier in the article.

But what happens if none of these commands or options match up? Shock, horror! We must make provision for this since, at any time, the clumsy and hamfisted user (you again, I'm afraid) might type in "MUMO" instead of "MEMO" and seriously upset the software. Stopping this is called error trapping. For the moment, however, we can cover ourselves by making the last line of the parser a coded version of the English statement: "If none of these match, then scream and shout and make the user enter another, correct, command."

```
1070 print CHR$(7);"I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW TO ";command$;" MASTER!"
1080 FOR x=1 TO 2500:NEXT x:RETURN
```

Line 1070 beeps and puts a message onto the screen. Line 1080 pauses as the computer counts from 1 to 2500, long enough for the operator to read the message before returning to the initial question.

However, we must ensure that no 'correct' command ever reaches this line of code or the program will appear not to understand it either. Look at the full listing. You will see that the parser is in fact a sub-routine itself. To clarify the program's structuring and decomposition, we could write the actual parsing lines which would normally appear like this –

```
1040 IF firstword$="PRINT" THEN GOSUB 2000:RETURN
```

in English, like this:

"If this is a match then GOSUB TO PRINTING and THEN RETURN TO WHERE YOU CAME FROM"

The reason for using a parser is to ensure that every correct command gets processed and returns normally. The ones that don't appear in the index will end up going all the way down to its last line and fall into our 'error trap'. Now it's time to type in the program below. ●

Keywords and phrases

You will find references to other BASIC keywords I have not yet described in the full listing. Don't worry if you don't know what they do yet, just type them in! However, if you have the manual for MALLARD then why not look them up and see if you can understand how I've made use of them. This is the first step towards writing more ambitious programs of your own.

Command performance

Once you have the program running, save it in ASCII form in the following manner:

SAVE "SLAVE.BAS",a

To test each module, type this at the "What is your wish ..." prompt:

DISPLAY SLAVE.BAS for the display module,

PRINT SLAVE..BAS for the PRINT module.

If you have last month's program you can also type

MEMO PLUSTEAM.NAM WITH PLUSTEAM.MEM

Don't forget the WITH and the spaces between each word. Once it's all ok you can start modifying it to suit your own needs. Good luck and good programming.

```
1030 IF INSTR(command$," ")THEN firstword$=LEFT$(command$,(INSTR(command$," ")-1))
1040 IF firstword$="PRINT" THEN GOSUB 2000:RETURN
1050 IF firstword$="DISPLAY" THEN GOSUB 2500 :RETURN
1060 IF firstword$="MEMO" THEN GOSUB 3000:RETURN
1070 PRINT CHR$(7);"I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW TO ";command$;" MASTER! "
1080 FOR x=1 TO 2500:NEXT x:RETURN
2000 REM PRINT ROUTINE
2010 printfile$=RIGHT$(command$,(LEN(command$)-LEN(firstword$)-1))
2020 IF FIND$(printfile$)=" " THEN PRINT 2021 ELSE 2040
2021 PRINT CHR$(7); "NO SUCH FILE!";
2030 FOR x=1 TO 2500:NEXT x: RETURN
2040 OPEN "I",1,printfile$
2050 WHILE NOT EOF(1)
2051 LINE INPUT #1,entry$:LPRINT entry$:WEND
2060 CLOSE #1
2070 RETURN
2500 REM DISPLAY ROUTINE
2510 displayfile$ =RIGHT$(command$,(LEN(command$)-LEN(firstword$)-1))
2520 IF FIND$(displayfile$)="" THEN 2521 ELSE 2530
2521 PRINT CHR$(7);"NO SUCH FILE!";
2522 FOR x=1 TO 2500:NEXT x:RETURN
2530 PRINT cls$:DISPLAY displayfile$
2540 PRINT:INPUT"PRESS [RETURN] TO CONTINUE ",a$
2550 RETURN
3000 REM SETS UP AND RUNS MEMOPROG.BAS
3010 REM YOU NEED LAST MONTH'S LISTING FOR THIS
3020 OPEN "O",3,"autofile.mem"
3030 PRINT #3,MID$(command$,(INSTR(command$," ")+1),((INSTR(command$,"WITH")-1)-(INSTR(command$," ")+1)))
3040 PRINT #3,RIGHT$(command$,(LEN(command$)-(INSTR ( command$ , "WITH") +4)))
3050 CLOSE #3:RUN "MEMO.BAS"
```

Big Spender

Learn how to finance those big expenses in your life with a little help from Tony Hart and Mini Office Professional's spreadsheet

Supporting cast

Like many Mini-Office users, I use the original version which had a rather "thin" instruction manual. A much better manual is John Hughes "ALL IN ONE – BUSINESS COMPUTING – AMSTRAD PCW & MINI OFFICE PROFESSIONAL".

Safety back-up

I would strongly recommend that you save the spreadsheet at regular intervals as you progress through the set-up. The [ALT]/[I], "Immediate Save" command in Mini-Office will automatically bring you back to the Edit screen after the sheet has been saved.

Sit down and have a think. What can you see your biggest financial outlay being in the near to mid-term future? Say you're fifteen; you might like to be the owner of a fast car by the time you reach the grand old age of eighteen. Wouldn't it be good if you could work out exactly how much money you need to put away between now and then, in anticipation of the big day?

If you're thirty-five, you may wish to send your very bright twelve year old to university when the time comes. Do you know what the annual cost will be? And how much do you need to start saving now to be able to cover that five-year expense?

Whichever scenario is the most in keeping with your personal set of circumstances, you can be sure of two things: it's going to cost a lot of money and you are going to need the time to prepare for it.

Picture, if you will ...

Let's use the example of the bright kid going to university. Currently, in 1990, she is twelve years old; she will go to university in seven years' time in 1996 when she's 19. That will cost about £4000 a year, every year, for the next five. Then there's inflation at an average of 9% p a.

The question is: "How much should I start saving per month now, and carry on saving, through to the end of her five-year university education, in order to fund the £4000-plus expense of each year ?"

To be realistic, you'll also need to take into account the inflation rate over the whole period. This will affect saving and spending patterns in two ways: firstly, inflation will increase saving capacity during the years prior to the spending, providing, of course, that your salary keeps in line with it! Secondly, it will generate an annual increase in costs over the five years at university.

Additionally (and this is better news) you'll need to throw interest rates into the pot because that will significantly increase savings, providing you invest your money in a Building Society or similar.

What can a spreadsheet do?

Given that period of grace before you have to start shelling out big numbers in pound notes, this article will show how to build a simple little spreadsheet which will model or project savings to prepare for that future expense. The expense can be over a period of time, like private school fees or supporting a son or daughter through university; it could even be a one-off outlay like a posh car.

A spreadsheet will:

1) Indicate the monthly savings needed from year 1 until the end of the spending period while allowing for inflation and interest rates.

2) Allow you to vary the interest or inflation rates to give the model a very realistic projection over the term of the saving and expenditure.

3) Allow you to alter the amount or duration of expenditure and of monthly savings to see how one affects the other.

The main idea is to project savings against expense, so that at the end of the total period nothing will be owed or saved.

Take a look at the first screenshot. This shows, graphically, an example of investing for a university education for a boy or girl who is twelve now and who would start university in 1996 and study for 5 years. The figure shows the total savings needed over the 10 years from 1990 to 2000; that will cover an annual expense of 3500 starting in 1996 for five years.

You'll see that the expense starts to eat into the ongoing savings each year until the final year when the savings run out and the expense finishes; the balance becomes zero.

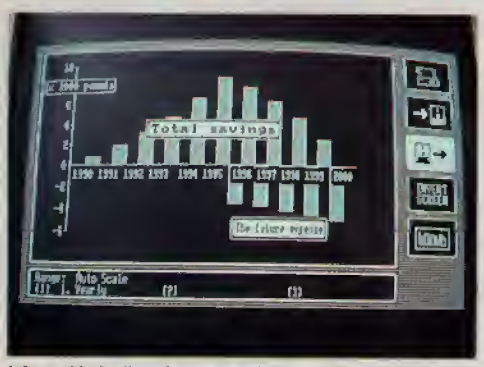
The second screenshot takes the explanation one step further to show the annual savings required each year. Note how the amount saved each year increases due to inflation.

Getting started

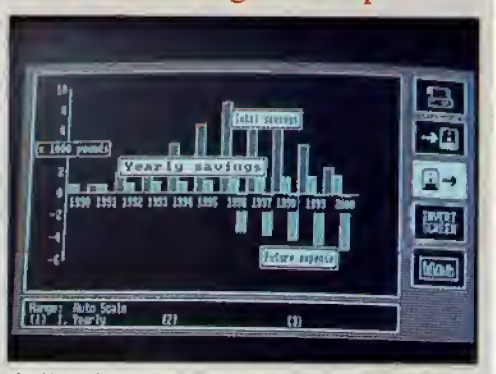
You need your PCW and Mini Office's spreadsheet. You need to know in which years the expense begins and finishes, the annual amount and a few other bits and pieces like interest and inflation rates - which this article will provide.

After a little while, you will end up with a financial investment model in which monthly savings, interest rates, years of expense and inflation rates can be

Initial investment forecasts ... and setting them up

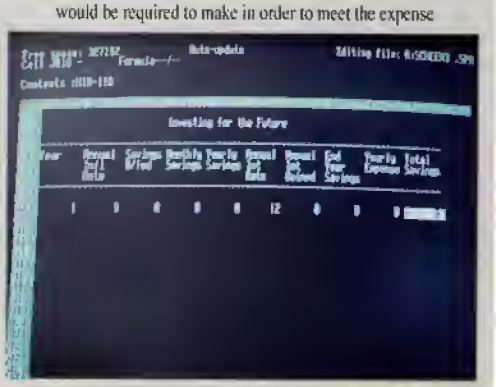


1. In graphic detail, the investment which might be required to send a 12 year old to university for five years, commencing in 1996



2. This graph, on the other hand, represents the annual savings you would be required to make in order to meet the expense

3. Type strings of text into the awaiting and, as yet, blank spreadsheet using Mini Office's [ALT]/[S] command



4. Entering calculations into the first row is the hardest part; but once you've done that, just copy the formulae into successive rows

varied in order to plan that long-term saving for the future expense.

In the meantime, load the spreadsheet. A blank spreadsheet will be displayed with the row and column numbers shown, ready for you to enter text, numbers and simple calculations.

Laying out the sheet

This is the easy bit! It's also the bit that structures the spreadsheet since this is where the basic columns and rows are laid down. (See screenshot 3). All the entries for this part are text or text string entries and are entered by simply typing in the text or by typing in "strings" of text using the [ALT]/[S] command.

For example, to enter the title of the sheet, do the following: a) move the cursor to cell D2 (column D, row 2) using the arrow keys. b) Press [ALT] and [S] simultaneously. The cursor will now move automatically to the top, left-hand data-entry cell ready for the text string to be entered. c) Type in "Investing for the Future" and press [ENTER]. Your title will now appear in cells D2 to F2. The rest of the text entries are entered by simply positioning the cursor at the relevant cell and then typing in the text. You don't need to use the [ALT]/[S] command.

The first row

The next step in preparing the sheet is to enter the numbers and calculations for the first row. Once this row has been entered, we simply copy it later – numbers, calculations and all – to the other rows.
Enter the numbers into the cells as follows:-

Cell	Enter	Description
B10	9	"Annual Infl Rate (%)
F10	12	"Annual Int Rate" (%)

The remaining cells are those cells with calculations in them. They are entered using the [ALT]/[F], enter formula command. For example, to enter the formula to calculate the interest gained on a year's savings, the following steps are taken:
a) Cursor to cell G10
b) Press [ALT] and [F] simultaneously
c) Enter"(C10+E10)*F10/100
that is, start savings + this year's savings + interest on both. Now enter all the other formulae using the [ALT]/[F] command as in the table below.

Cell	Title	Enter	Description
A10	Year	A9+1	last year + 1
C10	Savings B/fwd	J9	Last total savings
D10	Monthly savings	D9+D9*B10/100	savings + inflation
E10	Yearly savings	D10*12	monthly savings x 12
H10	End Year Savings	C10+E10+G10	Start+Year savings+Int
I10	Yearly expense	I9+I9*B10/100	last year's + infl'n.
J10	Total savings	H10-I10	saving – expense

Note how the formulae in cells A10, C10, D10, I10 and J10 all use a "dummy" cell from the blank row J. The first row, and the hard bit, is now completed (see screen 4) and ready to copy to the other rows.

Like many spreadsheets, this particular "sheet" carries out the same calculations on different values on different rows. Since the calculations are the same and the values, like inflation or interest rates are easy to enter, then we end up with a very easy to use spreadsheet.

Copying the other rows

For now we'll assume that interest and inflation rates will remain constant and copy them with the calculations into all the other rows. The number of rows depends upon the elapsed time between savings starting and expenditure finishing. For our example we'll continue to use the future university expense and will therefore need to copy an extra ten rows, i.e. the years 1991 through 2000. So, a) Position the cursor on the row to be copied and press [COPY]
b) Press [R] to select a row copy
c) Move the cursor down one to the blank row underneath and select [R] for a relative copy.

Mini-Office will then make a copy of the first row into the row indicated and will automatically adjust the cell calculations to work on this new row and not the one being copied.

Making the sheet work

Firstly, enter the starting calendar year which, in the example we're working with, will be 1990 in cell A10. When you've done this the sheet will automatically update the following years.

Secondly, enter the first year's spending. This will be the first year's university cost of living expense in 1996. So enter "4000" in cell I16. The sheet will automatically enter the values for the following years and will allow for inflation.

Finally, enter a monthly saving figure which will result in the last year's total savings reducing to, or near to, zero. In our example this is £75. So enter "75" in cell D10. Again the sheet will automatically enter the following monthly savings figures allowing for inflation.

If necessary, press [f3] to update the spreadsheet and you'll see the 10 year model of savings and expenditure from 1990 through to the year 2000. See screenshot 5. The real benefits of a spreadsheet can now be applied. Why? Because the variables in the sheet can be altered and seconds later another model will be laid out before your eyes.

To take advantage of this feature, and to add more realism to the model, a projection of actual inflation and interest rates will be entered. But don't forget! The objective of this model is to change a variable, like the expected expense, then to change the monthly savings so that the residual "Total savings" in the last year is as near to zero as possible. Introducing real interest and inflation rates rather than have today's rates applying throughout the eleven year period it would make sense to to try to project the actual rates into the model. To do this let's look at these rates over the past ten years. See screen 6.

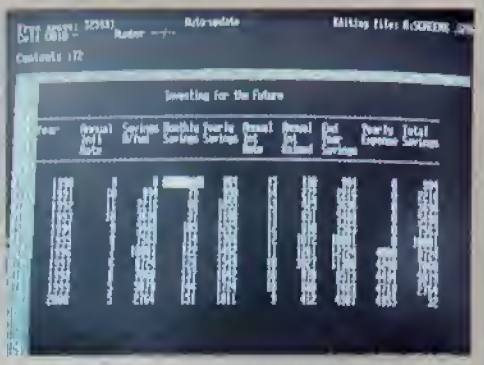
To project these over the next ten years we'll simply smooth the graph, change the dates and apply a bit of gut feeling about the way the British economy will perform in the next ten years - see screenshot 7. Now, apply these realistic rates to the spreadsheet model by entering the values in columns B, Inflation and F, Interest. (See screenshot number 8.)

Projecting realistic interest and inflation rates onto the model

5. The university investment model showing prospective savings and expenditure from the present day to the year 2000

6. Introducing current interest and inflation rates throughout the model. Here's what they looked like over the past ten years

7. Here's the way I see those interest and inflation rates looking over the next ten years ...



8. Now, apply those rates to the spreadsheet model by entering the values in columns B, Inflation and F and Interest

Special savers

This article uses a fairly simple model based on interest rates you'd get at the local building societ. However, there are other saving schemes which are particularly directed at the longer-term saver. John Majors' last budget, commonly known as the savers' budget, also introduced "TESSA" (Tax Exempt Special Savings Account), a five-year bank or building society investment which allows interest to roll up without deduction of tax. TESSA takes off in 1991.

Speakeasy

A programmer's lot is not a simple one. David Wilson explains the roles which tact, diplomacy and public relations play in the job

Just for a moment take a breath, pause and imagine that you've built, and then sold, a huge house of cards. Three months later, your client comes back and asks you to add half-a-dozen extra cards. No problem, you may think – but you can't just put them on top; you have to put them where your client wants them to go, and your convenience is the least of their concerns ...

Now pause once again and, this time, imagine that you've written one of those vast, historical sagas which your great-grandfather used to read. All the characters are related to one another, and, on top of the writing, you've gone to a lot of trouble to draw up a family tree. At a late stage, say the Friday before that weekend in which you have decided to visit your rich uncle in the Algarve at his expense, your publisher airily commands you to put in three new characters – by next Monday morning ...

David Wilson, "A programmer has to face the fact that his programs are going to maintain a thriving population of bugs."

Rogue to ruin

Of course, no sensible person would put up with this sort of thing for a moment, so it won't surprise you to hear that it happens to computer programmers every day of the week. And it's all our own fault! We're a supercilious lot. The first thing we learn is how to make our customers feel inferior – this is all very pleasant, but the corollary is that they think we can work miracles. I'm going to inflict a bit of jargon on you now, so wake up and pay attention.

A program written in a high-level language, one which uses nearly recognisable words such as IF and WHILE rather than using machine code, languages like C, Pascal or BASIC, will usually contain a large number of 'variables'.

If the programmer has been well brought up, these variables have meaningful names, like **Address_Of_Customer** or **VAT_Subtotal**, but self-employed hackers with arthritic typing fingers tend to prefer '**x**' and '**y**' or '**x$**' and '**y$**'. Unfortunately, this poses mnemonic problems – not just six months later, but sometimes even before you get to the end of the line of code you're writing.

I try to maintain some sort of system – I use **i%** for all main loop variables, with **j%** for inner loops, **r%** for returns from Jetsam functions, and so on – but my fundamental laziness has caused some wonderful crashes. The most dangerous parts of a big program are the ones that are used least frequently: when invoices suddenly start printing out in double-spaced italics, I know that it is time to start looking in the darker, more dusty corners of the program for a 'rogue variable.'

An even more humiliating disaster can be caused by 'self-incrementing' variables. Suppose the program displays selected customer accounts, and totals the amounts shown. Somewhere there's going to be an instruction like **sum!=sum! + disp!**, and it's just remotely possible for the careless programmer to forget to return **sum!** to zero before the variable is used in another part of the program ... .

Normally, there's no excuse for letting a blunder like this get through to your client, but it can sometimes happen if you've added a feature to an existing program. In the good old days at Le Mans, when each car had a mechanic on board as well as a driver, repairs and adjustments would sometimes be carried out while roaring down the Mulsanne Straight – I am beginning to understand what that must have been like.

The bug-hunter

You might think that nothing would be easier than to check a program for errors. Why not just put it through its paces before delivery? Test all its functions and features, and you can't go wrong. Well, I once started to work out the number of different pathways that could be followed through one of my simpler program suites, but vertigo soon made me give up. Luckily for all of us, the Star Wars defence system will now never be installed – the main control computers would have required at least ten million lines of program code. Even if I'd had a whole weekend free, I wouldn't have relished debugging that lot.

A programmer has to face the fact that his programs are going to maintain a thriving population of bugs, in the same way that a doctor has to accept that some of his patients are going to die, and the challenge is the same: how do you maintain the aura of competence which is part of your stock-in-trade?

It's always tempting to spin a web of jargon to excuse a blunder (especially when you have a well-founded belief that it's all the client's fault really), but I only do it on rare occasions. The main reason for this is that my clients have rather more knowledge and experience of the brave world of free enterprise than I have, and can spot a snow job a mile off.

Miracle worker

You might get away with blinding them with science once, but their waffle detectors are then put on permanent alert. Tell them the truth, on the other hand, and they'll almost always understand and forgive. A good move, I always find, is to let my client see the listing of the program, and pretend to think that he knows just a little bit more about the computer biz than he actually does. The wise programmer collaborates with his client rather than dictating to him.

Sometimes, of course, the fact that my clients are (almost without exception) first-time users of computers can work against me. In the world of corporate mainframe data-processing systems, a small change in the program takes three months, and costs an arm and a leg, but when I get a frantic 'phone-call, I have to go and adjust the program on the spot. Do my clients stand open-mouthed in amazement as I work high-speed miracles for them under warranty? I'll leave you to guess ... ●

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FLIPPER 2 was quite an unusual program. It could split your PCW's memory in two, letting you run LocoScript 2 in one half and a CP/M program in the other. Or it could let you load two CP/M programs at once, one in each half. It could even tackle tricky programs like Mini Office and LocoFile. Best of all it could FLIP you from one half to the other in as little as two seconds, any time you wanted. And it wouldn't lose your place.

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On a wing and a prayer

Sophie Lankenau dons safari suit and binoculars and journeys into deepest Gloucestershire to find the PCW playing an active part in one of the most natural habitats of all ...

Sir Peter Scott had a four point plan when he opened Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust in 1946; the centre was intended for conservation, research, education and recreation. Until his death in August last year, he was committed to ensuring that the trust maintained these responsibilities. The task which Sir Peter began was a massive one, and today it is being continued by some 160 equally dedicated staff – with a small force of Amstrad PCWs.

Slimbridge is the largest of the eight Wildfowl and Wetland centres in the United Kingdom. The site comprises 90 acres of 'collection' (ground given over for resident birds), and an additional 1000 acres of refuge for wild birds. With over 180 different species present at the trust every year, a high level of organisation and skill is required to continue vital studies of the world's endangered birds.

Press for action

Jackie Lefevre controls the reserve's Public Relations department. Her job entails promoting awareness of both Slimbridge itself and of key conservation issues. In one working day, contact will be made with targets as diverse as Government ministers and local primary schools. To assist her in this task, Jackie has an Amstrad PCW 8256; "When we first got the PCW" she commented. "we had two important considerations. We are a charity, we don't have money coming out of our ears, but we still needed to get our work done in a professional way. The PCW is a versatile machine which doesn't cost the earth. It was the best possible tool available to us at the time."

When the machines were first acquired, up to eight people shared one PCW. "It is a godsend that the organisation can now afford for me to have one of my

A small price to pay

The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust is located at Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, just off the M5 north of Bristol. The centre is open every day of the year except for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, from 9.30am to 5.00pm. Admission fees are £3.30 for adults (£2.30 for OAP's) and £1.70 for children between the ages of 5 and 16. There are concessionary rates for parties of 20 or more. Annual membership is available at £12.00 for adults, and £21.00 for families (two children and two adults). Further details can be obtained by telephoning the trust on 0453 890333.

SWAN SONG

John Bowler, research assistant."The fact that I can play a small part in helping with conservation and research is very important to me."

The work carried out at Slimbridge requires expert knowledge. John Bowler is a 27 year old research assistant at the trust, and has a BSc in Ecology. Before coming to Slimbridge in February 1989, John had been on several expeditions with Operation Raleigh, "I travelled to Kenya, Java and Seram in Eastern Indonesia to study endangered birds. The opportunity of a job at Slimbridge was a near-perfect way of continuing the kind of work in which I had become so interested abroad."

Slimbridge is populated by three varieties of swan – the mute swan, native to Britain, the Whooper from Iceland, and the Bewick's swan from Siberia. Approximately 600 swans visit the trust each year – every one of which has to be monitored by John and his colleagues. John's working day includes taking a 'register' to determine any new arrivals, "Every swan which comes to the trust is named, and a drawing of its unique bill pattern made. Although that sounds like a difficult task, the swans make it easier for us by forming groups – either as families, or just male and female partnerships. Also, 40-50% of the swans here are returning birds, who come back year after year to escape the cold weather in their native countries. There is a female Bewick's swan here called Prongy, who has just returned for her 26th consecutive winter!"

Although the birds build up a high degree of site loyalty, they will still settle at other reserves, "Every week we receive reports of birds that have been ringed here, but have turned up elsewhere in the UK or Europe. They are often found in the Netherlands, where the climate is favourable. We have to respond to the reports, checking our records against details of the sightings."

John describes his job at Slimbridge as the fulfilment of a life long ambition, "The fact that I can play a small part in helping with conservation and research is very important to me. I have a job which allows me to practice what started out as a hobby, in beautiful surroundings and with like-minded people." John is concerned about the future for both wildfowl, and wetland habitats, "I would like to see the kind of 'Green' awareness prevelant at the moment increasing yet further, not only here in Britain, but worldwide. The more we educate people about the seriousness of conservation issues, the better it will be. Time is running out – there is already very little left to save. We must ensure that existing wildfowl is managed in such a way that it is never endangered again."

READ ALL ABOUT IT

Jackie Lefevre, Press Officer, a job well done means" finding the words to translate scientific detail into something readable."

Press Officer Jackie Lefevre claims to have had 'no experience' of Public Relations before coming to Slimbridge. A look at her experience in the field of conservation, however, makes her one of the most ideally suited people for the job. Jackie has a degree in Zoology, and spent two years in Africa participating in a project which sought to re-introduce chimpanzees to the wild. On returning to England, Jackie became involved with environmental education, and then in nature conservation by joining her county wildlife trust as Development Officer. July 1989 saw her arrival at Slimbridge to specialise in conservation PR.

"The knowledge I have gained over the years removes the 'middle man' in the PR process. As long as I can find the words to translate scientific detail into something readable, then I'm doing my job properly. I think that it is vital to know your subject – as a charity, you owe it to the public to get your facts right, and to be accountable. People won't support you financially if they don't hear about the work which the trust is doing. We're not just breeding flamingos here because we want lots of cute flamingos – there is a good solid conservation application of the work done here to that which needs to be done in the wild, and the public must be aware of this".

The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, the British Trust for Ornithology and the Scottish Ornithologists Club have recently organised the 1990 Mute Swan Census. The aim is to check whether the UK's swan population has recovered from serious depletion recorded in the seventies and eighties. The culprits then were lead fishing weights, discarded by anglers and ingested by swans. Legislation in 1987 banned the sale of such weights, and organisations like Slimbridge are now keen to ascertain how the law has affected the numbers of resident mute swans in the country's wetland habitats.

Jackie and her PCW 8256 are responsible for the publication which the trust has produced to explain the census. The leaflet-sized document was written using a layout consisting of narrow page margins, which were then printed out on a daisy wheel printer. Each of the six pages were 'pasted up', and sent away for printing on recycled paper.

Jackie uses a PCW 8256 at work, and a 9512 at home. In her spare time, she does voluntary work as the press officer for another conservation organisation. Although she has used other word processing packages such as Wordstar and NewWord, Jackie prefers LocoScript 2 for her work both at home and at the trust. "My husband works for the Woodland Trust, and also uses the 9512 for producing management plans" she added.

A bird in the hand

How about this for an original birthday or Christmas gift? At Slimbridge, you can Adopt a Duck for £8.00, Guard a Goose for £12.00, and Foster a Flamingo or Nurture a Ne-Ne for £15.00. The ultimate is to Sponsor a Swan, which will cost you a £20.00. For this, not only are you given access to a resident bird of your 'own' which you can name, you are also making a valuable financial contribution to the trust.

own. I make too many mistakes to use paper! Everything I do, whether it is an internal memo, a press release, a policy statement – it all begins here, in this office, at this keyboard."

Because the weekly volume of paperwork leaving the office is so vast, there is no time to set up individual layouts for each letter, report or circular every time they are required. Jackie uses LocoScript 2 with LocoSpell to produce her work. She has set up a series of stock layouts in different groups on her working disc, so that every document produced conforms to a standard format on the finished page. At the touch of a key, predetermined guidelines as to margin widths, line spacing and tabulation can be called up as a template for the work being produced.

The use of stock layouts is a time-saving aspect of LocoScript welcomed by Jackie. 'It also means that I can create what is basically a standard letter, and tailor it to the needs of a specific organisation as I write it." The spellchecker is a useful addition to the program – especially since the dictionary can be expanded by the user to match special needs.

In the winter, the arrival of migrant birds to Slimbridge takes the total number to over 200 different species – all of which are documented using Latin names. Jackie has boosted the dictionary with several hundred Latin additons. "It's just a pity that there isn't a translation facility as well!" she adds.

By fair means or fowl

The PCW has made its presence felt in other departments at Slimbridge. Carl Mitchell is a research officer at the trust, and he explained how the machine has assisted him in his work. "Slimbridge produces an in-house journal called 'Wildfowl', which also goes out to the 30,000 people who have joined the centre as members. The journal is created and edited on the PCW using LocoScript, and the file is then converted into ASCII format to make it exportable. Our typesetters and publisher need to read information from a 5.25 floppy disc on a PC, so we have to download the text from the PCW via an RS232c cable, using the CP/M facility, PIP.COM. A piece of comms software for the PC called Crosstalk captures the file, and converts it into a readable form for the machine."

A sturdy database is an essential requirement for the work of the research team. "We needed to have easy access to thousands of scientific references in our work, so an agile database was vital", explained Carl. "The centre invested in Condor to handle the information. A card index system was created, and we could locate the appropriate reference by means of a search command called Keyword. It operates a bit like Masterfile – you simply type in a word, or part of a word in the reference, and the program delivers all the references containing that word. You then select from that list."

The role of the PCW has been an important one at the trust. Carl told us "The PCW constitutes an inexpensive, easy to use machine, which is an ideal stepping stone for someone who is starting out in computing. Unfortunately, our needs in the research department at Slimbridge have expanded beyond the capabilities of the machine. The volume of our work now warrants the introduction of a mini-computer system."

Will the PCW disappear forever from Slimbridge? "It's unlikely," said Carl, "The machine still has a key part to play in other departments, such as education and administration, where it is ideally suited to the tasks required of it."

Trust me

Sir Peter Scott believed strongly in what he called his 'Hundred Year Rule'. Press officer Jackie Lefevre explained. "Sir Peter maintained that if you haven't thought about the next hundred years, if you haven't considered the consequences of the action which you take, it is not worth doing in the long term. His vision for the organisation was so far-sighted and all encompassing; he had accounted for everything as far as conservation is concerned, from people and their environment, to birds and wetland areas."

Asked if there had been any major changes at the trust since the death of its founder, Jackie replied, "If there is any change, it is that everyone is even more determined to do their very best. We are lucky in that our goal has been set for us – all we have to do is keep the good work going, with the achievements of Sir Peter as our inspiration."

How far will computerisation assist in the task ahead? "When Sir Peter died, we realised that we had lost a genius" said Jackie, "No matter what 'technology' we introduce, it will never replace his sheer brilliance. The individual things which he could do now require the work of five people. We're ever conscious of our loss – that of someone whom David Attenborough described as the 'patron saint' of nature, and whom the natural world regarded as the international statesman for conservation." ●

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The program includes many helpful features, such as pop-up claculator, context-sensitive help windows and macro comands. The Money Manager package has over 25,000 users in the UK alone. It is the ideal program for people who find that traditional accountancy programs are too complicated, unwieldy and time-consuming for their requirements.

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VISA ACCESS AMERICAN EXPRESS

Marks out of 10?

Marksheet is a new program aimed at helping teachers with the mass of paperwork. Does it make the grade? Rob Ainsley gave it an examination

MARKSHEET
£45 ● Abacus Educational Software ● 11 Woodcote Drive, Orpington, Kent, BR6 8DB

The advent of GCSEs has resulted in even more paperwork for already overworked teachers. Given the popularity of PCWs among inhabitants of the staffroom, it is good to see something come along that might help things and let them spend more time teaching and less time being underpaid administrators. Of course you can use a number of existing programs very effectively to ease things, from using [CUT] and [PASTE] in LocoScripted reports ([PASTE]0: Can do better. [PASTE]1: A cheerful and willing pupil. [PASTE]2: An able pupil, and so on) up to organising your mark sheets onto a Mini Office or SuperCalc spreadsheet, and have everything calculated and printed out for you at the touch of a button.

But these all require you to get familiar with a piece of general software and customise it to your own requirements; with 'vertical software', the program is already set up for your own particular application, whether it be an estate agents' house database or keeping pupil mark sheets.

Marksheet, a new 'vertical software' program, is just that: a way of putting your term-end marks for each pupil onto disc. The advantages are that, once they are entered, class averages (for each pupil over the subject range, and each subject over the pupil range) are automatically calculated for you. You also don't have to enter them again to include in, say, a LocoScripted report: a 'print to disc' feature means you can put your mark sheets into a LocoScript document (by inserting the printed file to disc into a Loco document using [f1] in Loco 2 or [f7] in Loco 1). Class lists can be copied from year to year, meaning that you don't have to enter all the names again.

Basic skills

The program is very easy to work (the generous view is that teachers don't have time to wade through unhelpful manuals!) and has lots of on-screen prompting. You can enter mark sheets after ten minutes with the help of the simple manual. What it does, it does very effectively; averages are worked out quickly and it's easy to get the 'feel' of the program: [EXIT] always gets you out of where you are to a main menu, for example. Eventualities such as cheating and absenteeism through illness are catered for.

Unfortunately, Marksheet is rather slow in operation. Moving around the menus is cumbersome; selection of item 5, for example, is 5 [RETURN] instead of just 5, and the lumbering drawing of the rather crude graphics gets on your nerves after a bit. The program can't be run from the M drive to gee things up either.

There are a few programming anomalies too. I managed to get one pupil register a term average of 101%. You can set a password to protect your sheets, but on TYPEing a marks file in CP/M the password is the very first word you see – not exactly a great deterrent to a halfway competent hacker! There are also some strange 'echo' effects in places, such as password entry, and it's easy to get marks listed for only the first few pupils in a class if you've just edited the names.

End of term report

Mark sheets print out nicely, but at the price of £45, this is really a rather underpowered program. It just isn't fast enough in lookup or data entry, nor does it have enough features, to make it worth the money in my mind. For this price it should be sorting out the pupils in alphabetical order, printing out reports, making out graphs, bar charts and pie charts of scores, and more. You could run up a spreadsheet in Mini Office to do all this does - and much more - in a few minutes. Marksheet is easy to use, and may be worth a look, but don't expect it to suddenly clear those evenings you currently spend in the mark books. Only half marks, I'm afraid. ●

If you can spell this, thank a teacher

The program was developed in conjunction with teachers at the Friern Barnet Grammar School. (Or, as it was described to us by Abacus software, a "Grammer" school).

About the author

Rob Ainsley trained as a maths teacher because he wanted to do something for education. After his teaching practice term he realised the best thing he could do for education was to leave it.

FORM 1J SUMMER 1989

SURNAME	EN	MAT	FR	PH	CH	BI	CS	GE	HS	EC	AR	DR	PE	HE	AW	RS	CI	AV
Aaron	23	97	45	dd	90	85	63	dd	dd	64	45	61	14	53	24	89	67	59
Bach	67	65	65	85	74	67	54	73	63	62	73	21	85	75	42	85	73	66
Catullus	65	42	34	63	73	35	57	51	dd	89	94	64	43	85	43	62	56	60
Columbus	78	54	64	25	21	77	74	85	97	62	61	54	62	62	96	67	78	66
Dawid	13	56	3	64	67	4	76	43	63	62	73	63	83	85	64	63	100	58
Dracula	88	32	64	64	9	6	75	53	24	c0	76	85	03	42	95	12	c0	49
Escher	57	56	53	85	27	52	dd	42	62	42	87	dd	63	34	06	83	67	54

The normal display of marks for one class across subjects. The average is at the far right

```
1: group 6/REPORT  .1     Editing Text.                    Printer idle, Using    M:
Layout    1  Pi12   LSI    CR+0   LP6                              Page    1  line   1/5
f1=Actions    f2=Layout    f3=Style    f4=Size    f5=Page    f7=Spell    f8=Options   EXIT

The Times Past Grammar School - Central Records

Examination and Assessment Results SpreadSheets

FORM 1J                                                          SUMMER 1989

np= not present:  if pupil was absent
cc= cancelled:    if pupil was present but mark cancelled
dd= doesn't do:   if pupil doesn't do subject
ih= ill health:   if pupil present but ill - mark discounted

SURNAME      EN  MAT  FR  PH  CH  BI  CS  GE  HS  EC  AR  DR  PE  HE  AW  RS  CI  AV
Aaron        23   97  45  dd  90  85  63  dd  dd  64  45  61  14  53  24  89  67  59
Bach         67   65  65  85  74  67  54  73  63  62  73  21  85  75  42  85  73  66
Catullus     65   42  34  63  73  35  57  51  dd  89  94  64  43  85  43  62  56  60
Columbus     78   54  64  25  21  77  74  85  97  62  61  54  62  62  96  67  78  66
Dawid        13   56   3  64  67   4  76  43  63  62  73  63  83  85  64  63 100  58
Dracula      88   32  64  64   9   6  75  53  24  c0  76  85  03  42  95  12  c0  49
Escher       57   56  53  85  27  52  dd  42  62  42  87  dd  63  34  06  83  67  54
Goedel       dd  100  43  83  61  85  ih  56  62  cc  74  cc  76  34  52  83  29  65
Handel       67   65  63  74   8   6  cc  26  42  cc  21  dd  98  83  86  89  87  58
Johnson      99   98  63   2  24  15  83  52  24  52  85  dd  53   2  07  83  09  47
                                                                                  0
AVERAGE >    59   65  59  55  50  39  65  57  60  64  61  61  62  53  55  61  73  57

EN = English              MAT = Mathematics              FR = French
```

A marks sheet can be inserted easily into a LocoScript document. Note the averages at the bottom. Does it make the grade?

Marksheet

Pluses

- ▲ Dead easy to use – takes five minutes to learn
- ▲ Mark sheets can be inserted into LocoScript
- ▲ Good onscreen help
- ▲ Averages work out for you

Minuses

- ▼ Underpowered and slow
- ▼ Drawing of menus is tedious
- ▼ Some oddities: dodgy arithmetic, poor password protection, echo effects, can't work from M
- ▼ Expensive for what it is

Ease of use	5/5
Documentation	4/5
Range of featres:	1/5
Performance	3/5
8000 Plus Value Verdict	13/20

THURSTON TECHNIQUES

FoneMate - 706K disc. Includes the FoneMate LocoFile for Personal and Business records to merge with many pre-designed LocoMail files that automatically produce label and list options for you. LocoFile of National telephone codes and exchanges with Merge List options, Diary, 5 year calendar, appointment diaries etc. For 8512/9512. New London codes included.

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PCW 9512 owners	- **TempDisc 9** - dbl density drive A	£19.95

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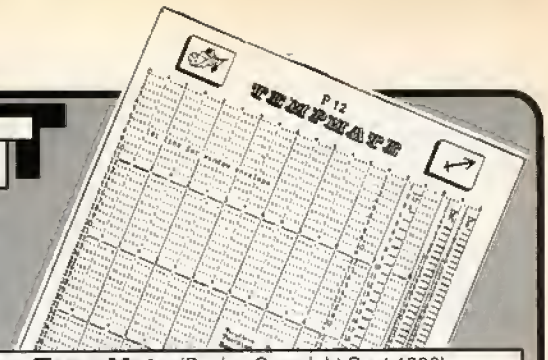

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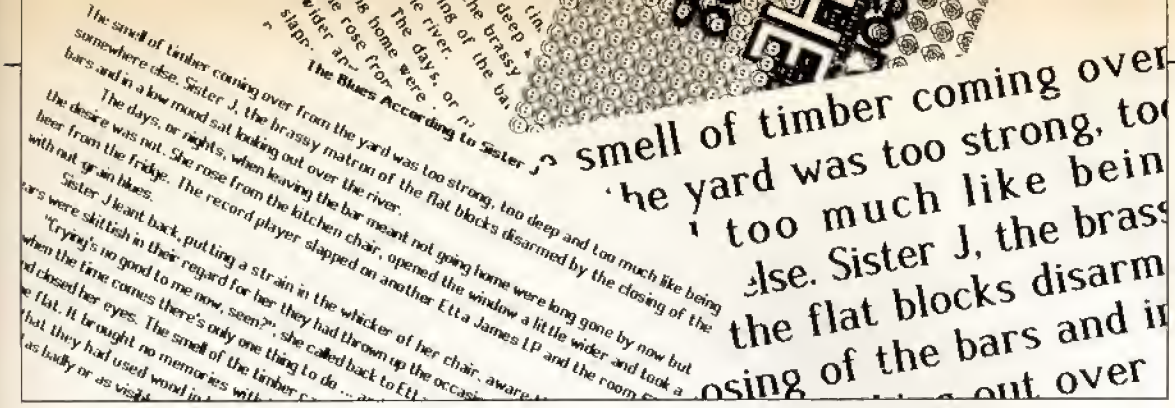


Fonts of Inspiration

Bored with the same old typefaces in Micro Design? Tim Smith looks at some alternatives in the form of MD Cleartext

MD CLEARTEXT

£13.50 ● Exemplar Design ● PO Box 683 BA1 1XU

Rarely a month goes by without a mention of Creative Technology's Micro Design II desktop publishing package; either the company are bringing out additions to the initial package or other firms are producing 'bolt-on' software. MD Cleartext is just such an add-on. At heart it is a disc packed with Area files (MDAs), CUT files (MDC) and fonts or typefaces (MDFs).

The idea of having different typefaces to do different jobs is a common one in the publishing world. After all, you won't find *The Guardian* using the same 'face' as *The Times*, or *The Beano* using the same as *Sporting Life*. Typefaces, or fonts as they are sometimes known, are more than a matter of taste however; they also enable you to give your own work a sense of visual identity.

More and more often we find press releases coming into the 8000 Plus office of which we can say, at a glance, "That one was done using Stop Press" or "There's Micro Design". This is because people will tend to stick with the typeface which came with the software. This has a definite drawback once a piece of software has become popular and many people find themselves using it. You find that your work will get lost in the crowd.

Typeface the music

MD Cleartext aims at solving this problem by allowing you to incorporate new faces. It must be said that this product comes with a well-respected pedigree. John Evans, the man behind the product, has already brought us such desktop publishing standards as Designer Stubble. So from the first you know that you are going to be in for something good.

Our review copy of MD Cleartext came on a single 720k (B: drive) disc, although it is also available in A drive format. Using the double density format, different goodies are stored in user groups 1 through to 4 (to access a new group in Micro Design, press [ALT]+ the required number). These range from entire upper and lower case 'fonts' – a font being the upper and lower case alphabet in a particular typeface – to large single letters saved as CUT files and entire Areas showing the font.

Cleartext is designed to run under Micro Design's 256k format so, if you have a standard 8256, you won't be able to get the full use from the disc. John Evan's documentation deals with the technical detail of the Micro Design/MD Cleartext alliance in a clear, straightforward manner. It explains that Cleartext was designed in the knowledge that "Every alternative horizontal pixel in Micro Design's 256k map is designated as a 'half-pixel' ... this allows the program to make full use of the high density print routines available on most external printers." The built-in PCW printer, however, does not make use of these half pixels and, as such, loses some definition. MD Cleartext has been designed to compensate for this.

In either single or double density format you are treated to several serif and sans serif fonts – or 'oversized' single letters in both upper and lower case and, interestingly, there are also non-English character sets. This last selection comes in the form of letters with built-in (or on) accents such as upside down question marks in the Spanish set, acute accents in French and the German umlaut.

With more and more small companies making use of the PCW and with 1992 looming ever larger on the horizon, the ability to import LocoScript's foreign character sets into 'body text' and combine these with large, clear headings and sub-headings using MD Cleartext takes desktop publishing on the PCW up another gear. A package such as this will allow not only posters and leaflets to be produced, but also company reports which would grace many a boardroom desk.

Usage and abusage

The problem which many people find when using large fonts or even large images is break-up along the diagonal and curved plains. This is exemplified by jagged edges in the print out. MD Cleartext avoids this with great style and the printout, even from a built-in PCW dot matrix printer, shows none of these edges and flaws.

If you make use of a non-standard printer which can download characters, these character sets will do no harm whatsoever to your work. It is more than apparent that a great deal of time and thought has gone into the construction of fonts and single letters and this will clearly be reflected in the end result.

Another excellent point to note about MD Cleartext is the fact that Creative Technology, the creators of Micro Design, took an active part in the development of the package; you can be sure, therefore, that both software packages will run happily with each other. Should you decide to edit any of the fonts, Exemplar Design will be only too willing to consider your reforms – a healthy sign in itself.

Fontastic

Overall, therefore, this bolt-on package leaves the 8000 Plus office with a strong 'thumbs-up.' An in-depth knowledge of desktop publishing, the PCW and Micro Design are shown throughout – for example, this is the first piece of software which we have seen in some time to make use of the underrated User Group facility in CP/M; this allows you to keep your work organised and your working practices clear.

The fonts are well defined in both serif and sans serif, the non-English character sets are useful and achieve a great deal within the tight parameters under which they were designed. There is no fraying or jagging of edges and you are encouraged to experiment with both spacing and pitches. All in all, MD Cleartext is an important addition to any PCW desktop publishing library. We look forward to seeing more. ●

Oh ma serif!

What is the difference between a serif typeface and a sans serif? Well, put confusingly, the sans serif lacks serifs! So what is a serif? Not to put too fine a point on it, a serif is a useless bit of frippery which goes on to the head or foot of a letter. For example, the letter 'L' has a small rising point on the end of its 'foot', it also has a cross bar. This is because we are using a serif typeface called Times Roman. The letter 'L' in a sans serif typeface such as Helvetica would look like this :'L'.

MD Cleartext

Pluses
- ▲ Non - English fonts
- ▲ Serif and sans serif
- ▲ Plenty of material

Minuses
- ▼ Not for 8256 users

Ease of use	5/5
Documentation	5/5
Range of features	4/5
Performance	5/5
8000 Plus Value Verdict	19/20

Doctor in the House

Sharon Bradley and Tim Smith review a suite of new health and diet-conscious programs for the PCW; are they just what the doctor ordered or is it simply a case of quack, quack, oops?

It's difficult to know exactly towards which bracket of PCW owners North Micro Laboratories are targetting their string of highly original software releases; a cursory glance would seem to suggest that there's something of interest here for just about everyone.

Between them, the three double-sided 3 inch discs include an automatic symptom evaluator, a diet menu-maker complete with a table of the calorific values, per ounce, of nearly every kind of food you care to mention, an auto-conversion program (which deals with anything from apothecaries' measures to shirt collar sizes) and a rather unusual game with a distinctly medical flavour to it – to name but four.

There is even a program for the over 18s called Frankly Sex, which, as its name implies, handles most issues relating to heterosexual relationships in a very frank, down-to-earth manner. There's also a plethora of smaller, information-packed programs which tackle – among other subjects – drug and alcohol abuse, hypnotism, giving up smoking and herbs.

The fitness-conscious PCW owner who has more than a fleeting interest in matters physical and/or medical will find much to keep him- or herself occupied and amused; the committed hypochondriac, on the other hand, is guaranteed to have a whale of a time and is advised to stay well clear of it – particularly with the spearhead package of the suite, CASE (or Computerised Automatic Symptom Evaluation).

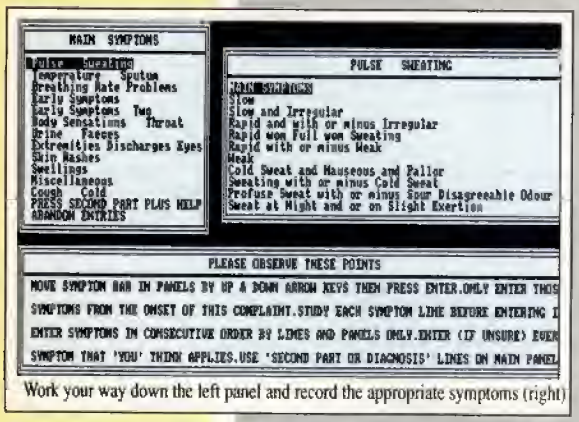
Let's take a look at the programs.

Disorders ordered

CASE holds the details of up to 90 diseases and conditions. So what kind of ailments are they? Well, there's something here for just about everybody – from anaemia, angina and asthma to urethritus, pneumonia and meningitis.

CASE (Computerised Automatic Symptom Evaluation) ● £50 with Micro Medic Game

The Computerised Automatic Symptom Evaluation program is the modern successor to those trusty home medical advisory tomes that are handed down from generation to generation and which are generally much beloved by people inhabiting isolated outposts - like lighthouses. Of course, isolation is probably the single most important ingredient for the successful perusal of such books; that way, the mind can slowly convince itself - without any risk of interruption - that the body is experiencing simultaneously all those symptoms suggestive of the most gruesome disorders imaginable.



Work your way down the left panel and record the appropriate symptoms (right)

CASE differs from such tomes, however, in that it delays until the last possible moment the dealing of the fatal blow. In other words, you enter, from a methodical series of comprehensive lists, all those symptoms from which you happen to be suffering. As CASE's creators point out, this process is rather like someone asking you how you feel. When you've worked your way through all the panels, the program will chug and flash conscientiously for a few seconds as it rummages through its memory banks in search of a suitable condition, and then display it on the screen.

Abbreviate to elucidate

CASE holds the details of up to 90 diseases, from whooping cough to gonorrhoea. The only trouble is that the programmers behind the package have defined each disease through a set of strictly-defined symptoms; consequently, you have to enter *all* of those symptoms in order to come up with a sensible disease. Otherwise you will be presented with a rather unhelpful CASE IS NOT PROGRAMMED FOR THAT DISEASE message on the screen; rather frustrating when you're convinced that you're in the terminal stages of something dire.

But although you have to register all of the symptoms, it doesn't matter if you record spurious ones. One other point to consider is that your symptoms must be entered in consecutive order; that means starting from the top of each panel and working your way down. Once you have finished with a particular panel, you can't go back to it unless you also reload the program.

Because of the need to fit detailed symptoms physically into the panels, the programmers have come up with some rather inventive – not to mention, arcane – abbreviations. Acquainting yourself with these before you start is a good idea if you want to get the most out of the program. For example, **PAT** is short for patient, **STMC** for stomach, **wom** for 'with or minus' – and so on.

The first part of the program is made up of 12 consecutive symptom panels. These establish anything from pulse rates and abnormal sweating, to breathing rates and body sensations. The second section is made up of another eight panels which home in, respectively, on more specific matters like skin condition, mental state and various aches and pains.

If you haven't guessed by now, the program is certainly very thorough; its creators, though, offer a rare recommendation for a software house: they "sincerely hope that you seldom need to use the diagnostic part of CASE."

How ill is ill?

We have to say, however, that the documentation really let this one down. Even though North Micro-Laboratories had kindly printed it out from the disc for us, it didn't really strike us as being the most complete catalogue of a program's features we'd ever read. In fact, we had to 'phone them up a few times to get various details ironed out; very obliging though they were, the 'phone calls could have been avoided.

It must be said that this program won't be everyone's cup of tea; it will undoubtedly appeal, however, to that PCW-owning contingent who also regularly consult home diagnostic manuals. It will also be good fun for anyone with a healthy interest in medical conditions. Hypochondriacs would be well advised to steer clear of it. ●

Case

Pluses
- ▲ Very thorough and easy to use
- ▲ Quite good fun

Minuses
- ▼ Documentation could be better
- ▼ You have to enter all the symptoms
- ▼ Far too expensive

Ease of use	5/5
Documentation	2/5
Range of features	3/5
Performance	3/5
8000 Plus value verdict	13/20

Q.E.D.

Credit, where it's due: NML have thoughtfully included a number of useful program guidelines for the user; for example, how rapid does a pulse have to be before you classify it as fast? They have also included a number of example disorders, along with panel by panel details of the various symptoms recorded to show you exactly how CASE works.

THE MARVELLOUS MICRO-MEDIC GAME ● £20

An unusual little package this one with a number of very different uses; a gruesome game for those of a medical – not to mention, macabre – turn of mind or perhaps a revision tool for a swotting medic. It's up to you.

The Micro-Medic Game can be played by a minimum of one player and a maximum of six. The object of the game is to identify the correct set of symptoms – from a choice of three sets – which constitute the disease or condition at the top of the page.

And it's not as easy as it might sound, principally because the differences between each of the three sets of symptoms which appear on your screen tend to be so subtle as to be barely perceptible a lot of the time. At times, it's rather reminiscient of those awful multiple choice biology questions that one lurched one's way rather erratically through at 'O' level. So unless you're quite a knowledgeable human biologist, the chances are that this particular game is going to give you quite a good run for your money challenge-wise. Unless, of course, you get one of those howlingly obvious true or false statements; surely no-one could seriously be labouring under the delusion that the spleen can be found in the lower reaches of the left leg – could they?

The great leveller

You have to be interested in the subject matter, though, so we're not sure that it will make for much jocularity of the after-dinner kind – as its creators suggest in the documentation. It is a tad gory in parts, so those of you of a delicate disposition consider yourselves warned.

Most of us have suffered at its hands at some time or another - but can we be sure of the actual symptom details?

The game has been spiced up in a number of ways which manage to combine elements of luck and skill to a quite successful, frustration-provoking degree. Special features include the free gold bonus award and the dreaded equalizer; the former awards 5000 free points while the latter levels the score to zero if the wrong set of symptoms is selected. After the first player has hopefully successfully pinpointed his or her six diseases, it becomes the turn of the next contestant to try their diagnostic powers.

The game is okay but we have to say at this point that it's horrendously over-priced. ●

Micro Medic

Pluses
- ▲ Quite challenging
- ▲ Reasonably addictive

Minuses
- ▼ Badly overpriced

8000 Plus value verdict 3/5

Where from and for how much?

You may be interested to know that the programs can be bought collectively – as three double-sided discs – for the price of £130 from North Micro-Laboratories, CNR House, High Street, Nordelph, Norfolk PE38 OBL ('phone number 036 68 274). Alternatively, you can buy the programs individually, CASE being the most costly at £30.

DIET MENU-MAKER AND CALORIE VALUES ● £30

North Micro Laboratories put this dietary controlling software together with three objectives in mind; firstly, to provide a diet that is reasonably balanced, healthy and varied; secondly, to avoid strictly seasonal foodstuffs and, thirdly, to ensure that all the lunch menus could be used as packed lunches if and when required. They also preferred to use dinner menus that could be prepared with a minimum of fuss using only simple boiling, frying or baking procedures.

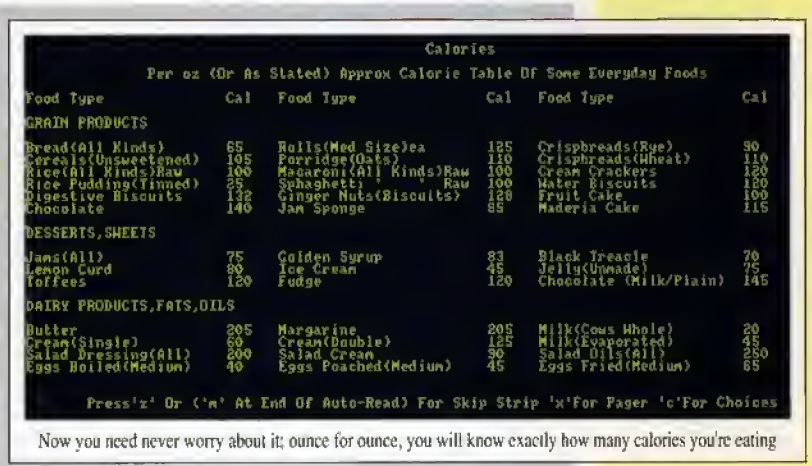
On entering the diet generator, the program first asks you a number of questions: do you want a pork-free diet? Do you require a vegetarian diet? And, finally, do you want to restrict your entire daily intake of food to 1000 or 1500 calories? Now this is all well and good, but nowhere does the program inquire if the user is allergic to, or has a violent dislike of, certain foods. It seems like a bit of an oversight really only to cater to the very widest religious and/or ethical culinary preferences.

The good news is, however, that the program's creators have included a substitute list for all the foods that they have used. In other words, where there is mention of cereals, you could just as easily eat Quaker Oats as Shredded Wheat, Weetabix or Raisin Bran. Where fruit is specified, cherries, pineapple, strawberries, blackberries and so on, are interchangeable.

Turnip for the book

In addition, there is a list of foods, mostly fruit and vegetables, that have been labelled ad lib foods. All this means is that when the going gets really tough – that is, you're starving hungry and you've got another three hours to wait before the next pigathon (in your dreams, we might add) – you can eat up to eight ounces of these or a mixture of them. And if the prospect of eating eight ounces of turnip tops as a stop-gap works you up into a fever of anticipation, well, it must be desperate.

Once you've selected the kind of diet that you're interested in, it's a simple matter to print out the coming week's delights. Seven daily menus appear on the screen; it's up to you whether you choose to print them out or not. A day's typical menu is as follows:



Now you need never worry about it; ounce for ounce, you will know exactly how many calories you're eating

Fried egg and two thin slices of bread with 6 oz of stewed apples
2 slices of bread, 3 oz of cheese spread. 6 oz of tomato, 6 oz of celery and 4 oz of orange. 6 oz of tomato soup, 6 oz of cod roe (fried in breadcrumbs), 6 oz of boiled potato, 6 oz of baked beans and 4 oz of stewed plums. Choose a)0.75 oz of chocolate b)apple and tangerine or c) half a pint of beer

Bearing in mind that we're talking about diets here, it could be a lot worse.

The program's next main option provides you with a very comprehensive table of calorific values stretching over quite a few pages. Not only will this be of interest, in its own right, to the staunch, long-term dieter, it will also be of use when it comes to modifying, if need be, the supplied menus to your personal tastes.

The Menu-Maker and Calorie Quantifier is one of the most successful programs in this suite of packages. It is obvious that firstly, a lot of work has gone into its creation and lastly, that it has been prepared with the end-user very much in mind; at £30 it also represents the best value for money. ●

Menu Maker

Pluses
- ▲ Very useful calorie table
- ▲ Program is usable and well prepared

Minuses
- ▼ Still quite expensive
- ▼ Documentation is on the disc
- ▼ Printout facilities not terribly sophisticated

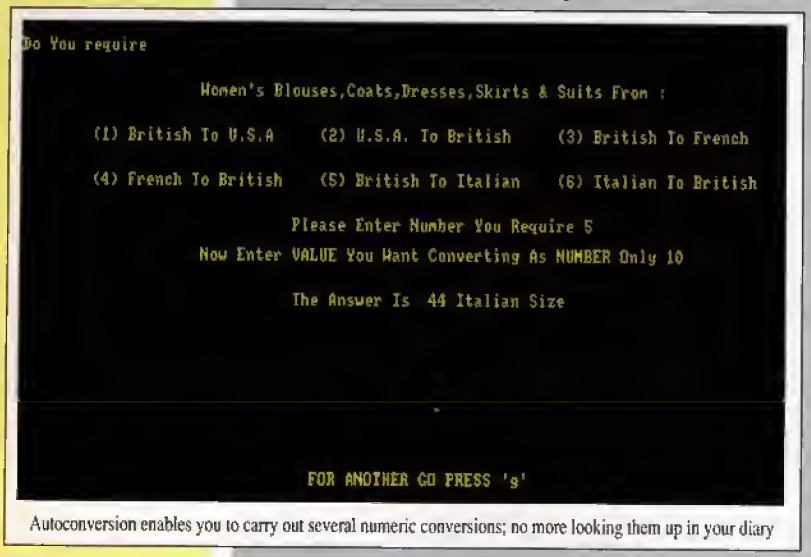
Ease of use	5/5
Documentation	2/5
Range of features	5/5
Performance	4/5
8000 Plus value verdict	16/20

Diet generator

North Micro Laboratories claim that there are approximately 28,700 variations of diets not including the tens of thousands more available via the substitute diet menus. That ought to be enough to keep you going for a while!

AUTO CONVERSIONS ● £15

As is becoming the fashion of late, this program comes with no hard copy manual (no book); instructions are supplied on disc in the form of a BASIC file (1k in length). The program itself is fairly straightforward in its intent and practice. As its name suggests, Auto Conversions provides a variety of numeric conversions including 'miles to furlongs', continental clothes sizes to British sizes and farenheit to centigrade, to list but three.



Autoconversion enables you to carry out several numeric conversions; no more looking them up in your diary

Birth pains

While browsing through the section on first aid, and expecting advice on whether to use butter on scalds (don't) we were amazed to see the following two sections. How to deliver a baby and how to give a tracheotomy. All well and good, everyone should know these things. But once we had descended into the 'going for a walk in the country and having to deliver a child using fishing wire to tie the umbilical cord' we thought it might be time to move on ... to the professionals.

Using the program is simple enough. At the outset you are asked to choose which numeric conversion you would like to make. This choice is available from a menu which provides more options than you would have thought there were conversions to be made.

You input your choice and are taken to a new screen which may or may not contain a number of sub-choices (for example when converting clothes sizes from British to European you are able to choose between Italian, French and a few others). Pick your option and give the number you would like changed in decimal (for those mischevious programmers among you who can read and understand hexadecimal or octal you might like to get your shoes measured in these!). Just enter your number and that's it! Once the new figure is sent to the screen you are asked to 'Press g' to continue. This takes you back to the initial screen. It is a shame that you are not given the option of converting the same units twice in a row (as in inches to miles or metres to miles in case you were measuring up or planning a garden for example) instead of having to return to the main menu and this does smack of weak programming.

Basically not

All of the programs reviewed here run under Mallard BASIC which you will need to have running on disc or from the M: drive. This version of the BASIC language comes with two interesting features; it is quite possible to save a program using the following format;

SAVE "TOGIB.BAS",p

The ,p at the end of the line means that the program is now protected. In effect, this means that it cannot be listed to screen or printer; nor can it be edited. All the programs in this suite are protected.

Another facet of Mallard is the OPTION RUN function which disables the [STOP] key and [ALT]+C escape routine. This is all well and good if you have built an exit routine into your program. If not, you lock the user into it until they reset their PCW by either switching it off or using [SHIFT]+[EXTRA]+[EXIT]. None of the North programs here allow you to return to the BASIC ok prompt let alone CP/M, and all of them (it appears ... as they are protected we could not list them) have OPTION RUNs included. This irritation is compounded by the fact that each of the discs contain more than one program. The lack of exit possibilities means that there is no way to move between them other than by re-booting (switching off and on) the PCW.

CASE Supplement One ● £20

This disc contains textual information on 'home nursing', vitamins, drug and alcohol abuse, teenagers and juveniles, 'disease times' (or their gestation periods to be slightly less cryptic), E numbers, vitamins and hypnotism. These consist of pages of 'advice' and 'tips' which can be scrolled across your PCW screen. For example, the 'Teenagers and juveniles' section draws on Mr North's anecdotal experience (in fact anecdotes are a staple for Mr North's loosely connected set of opinions – one relates to him hypnotising his mother in 1942!) as a foster parent. You are led through such topics as smacking, earrings (which, we are told, "are acceptable to some classes") and 'little horrors'. After a few pages of this you may make your escape or, rather, return to a menu.

It should be understood that none of the files on this disc are programs as such; that is to say that none of them actually do anything for you other than provide reading matter. They are simply pamphlets which have been written into a BASIC listing and which are then available for you to browse through when the fancy takes you.

The 'information' is written in a rather esoteric style; for example, possesives – 'babys' in this context actually means belonging to the baby. Spelling is also a free-form experience (no hang-ups or repressions here); North Micro Laboratories really like getting into the fundermentals (sic) and you will not find yourself suffering from suffication (again ... sic).

As for the information which the program purports to convey, the section on disease times gives gestation periods and symptoms for several virulent-sounding illnesses. The section on E numbers lists the numbers next to the name of the additive (there is no mention of where these might appear) and then continues with a small sub-section giving various ailments (from asthma to gout) which these Es might cause or aggravate. These titbits scroll along and using [EXTRA]+[PTR] can be screen-dumped.

FRANKLY SEX ● £20

This set of files comes with password protection on side A of the disc. The passwording entails a line of BASIC programming on your part so that information contained within the program may be kept from children (or anyone else for that matter).

The program itself comprises yet more turgid text files. These contain Mr North's opinions on various elements of physical sex from masturbation to experimenting with positions. Leaping from point to point in the same way as an intelligent fourteen year old might after having discovered the National Geographic magazine, it also contains a few virulent diatribes against the homosexual community.

At base, Frankly Sex appears to be one man's trek through physical love. It merits no further comment except to say that a paperback edition of the Karma Sutra would be better written, less opinionated, cheaper and far less patronising.

Side B of the disc contains another mish-mash of opinion relating to subjects as diverse as First Aid, Giving Up Smoking, All (sic) About Herbs, mineral needs and a section called Just for Women.

This last section contains text relating to PMS (Premenstrual Syndrome), "women sufferers will know the symptoms...", AIDS/HIV – " the result of disgusting sexual practices in far off lands... brought back to the more civilised countries", contraception and other subjects which might be of passing interest to someone. Again this can be printed out using [EXTRA+PRINTER].

The other sections on the disc read just as much like a polemicist with a PCW – or any computer or ballpoint pen for that matter. The PCW itself is merely (under)used as an electronic pamphlet. ●

N.M.L VARIOUS

Pluses

- ▲ Comes on re-formattable 3 inch disc
- ▲ Auto conversion quite a useful listing

Minuses

- ▼ Opinion rather than fact
- ▼ Appalling English
- ▼ Patronising

Ease of use	2/5
Documentation	1/5
Range of features	1/5
Performance	1/5
8000 Plus value verdict	5/20

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Identity Parade

We review the upgrade to a disc cataloguer which shows you exactly how to locate the file you're looking for

The cost of an upgrade

Lindex is available from Festival Software Services for the price of £8.50. SuperLindex costs £14.95 inclusive of VAT, postage and packing. Owners of the former can upgrade to the latter at a cost of £6 providing that the original Lindex master disc is returned to the following address: Festival Software Services, 470 Leeds Road, Thackley, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD10 9AA.

SUPERLINDEX

£14.95 ● Festival Software Services ● 0274 613300

If the name of this program is beginning to clang dim and distant bells, don't worry, you're not experiencing 'deja vu'; we reviewed Lindex, this program's predecessor at the end of last year. SuperLindex represents a significant upgrade on its earlier version. But first, what was so special about Lindex to merit the maximum ratings we gave it?

Any experienced PCW user will know just how easy it is to accumulate over the months – or even, years – an impressive collection of 3 inch dises. Tracking down a particular file to resume work on it can be a protracted, tedious affair which involves working your way through each disc, carrying out numerous DIRs in the vague hope of recognising the filename.

Lindex eleverly exploited LocoScript's Identity Text option ([f1] Actions menu when in Edit mode) so that when the program listed all the files on the disc, group by group, to the screen (or indeed, printer), the filename would be accompanied by a few lines of explanatory text: like the file's name, subject matter and size. It couldn't have been simpler to use.

LocoFile link-up

SuperLindex, as its name implies, is a beefier version of the same. Where Lindex was primarily for use with LocoScript files (both versions of the program were catered for), SuperLindex will now accommodate CP/M-based files – all sixteen groups of them if need be. Of course, a CP/M word processed document will lack LocoScript's Identity Text facility; Protext's equivalent, however, is the >CO (or >>>) comment line. This performs exactly the same function: when editing the document normally, the text following the command appears on the screen but won't on normal printout. SuperLindex will use it, however, as the explanatory text when cataloguing the files.

SuperLindex similarly makes use of ;, the CP/M file comment line or *, the dBASE II command file.

The other main difference between Lindex and its successor is the latter's ability to write the catalogue of a particular group to one of two different kinds of file. The first of these is an ordinary .CAT file and is the same as that sent to the printer. The second kind of catalogue is saved as a .DAT file. This holds more information and is in a form which can be read easily into a database like LocoFile. For example, the details of each file are stored in a twelve-field record. Three fields (of 30 characters each) are devoted to the explanatory text. Because the maximum record size is only 148 characters, all trailing spaces are automatically removed from the fields.

Space invaders

The [f7] Options menu indicates how big the .CAT or .DAT file can be (less than 43K). If the file gets anywhere near this size, SuperLindex automatically curtails the file and informs you of its decision with the message: **CATALOGUE FILE TRUNCATED DUE TO INSUFFICIENT MEMORY SPACE. Too many files catalogued.** This ability to merge catalogues into a LocoFile database is easily the most powerful innovatory feature to be introduced to this already highly successful package.

Other differences can be detected on printing out the group catalogues. Incorporated into SuperLindex is a three-column printout facility which echoes the three 30-character lines that LocoScript allows for identity text. The identifying text of non-LocoScript files, on the other hand, is presented as a single line.

Also new to SuperLindex is a Condense output text (again available from the [f7] Options menu). If you tick this option, multiple spaces recorded within the Identity Text are condensed to single ones to save space. Sometimes it is best to use the three lines available in the Identity Text option to record three parcels of information; although clearly separate, they relate to the same file. If you prefer to print these out exactly as recorded, selecting the Condense output text option will not string them together willy-nilly; the program will insert a colon to separate the lines.

Scroll on

As with Lindex, you're not under any obligation to print out the lists of your files. Sometimes, it will be enough to see them scrolling down the screen. To freeze the frame for closer inspection, just press [f1]. Hitting the [EXIT] key, as before, re-enables the scrolling action.

Most of the other Lindex features have remained unchanged; you can still carry out selective cataloguing by specifying which groups and even filetypes (or file patterns) you're interested in listing. The main difference here is that instead of having three drives available for possible cataloguing you now have the option of listing the contents of drives A to P!

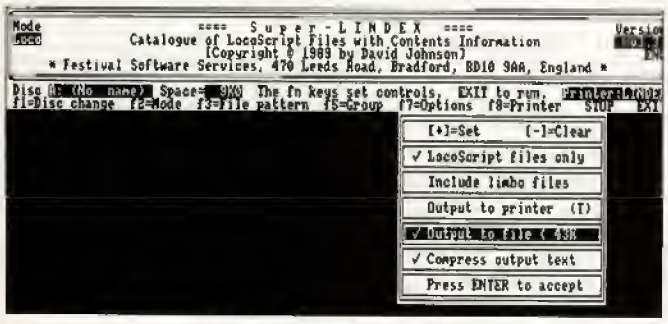
Our only gripe, this time, was the jumbled documentation accompanying the software. This consisted of a Lindex instruction leaflet with a pink insert sheet highlighting the differences in the Superlindex application. Knowing that this rather disjointed effort is but a temporary state of affairs did little to dispell our, at times, hair-tearing confusion.

In Super-Lindex, Lindex has reached the height of its potential, exploiting both the power of the PCW while meeting the requirements of its many users. ●

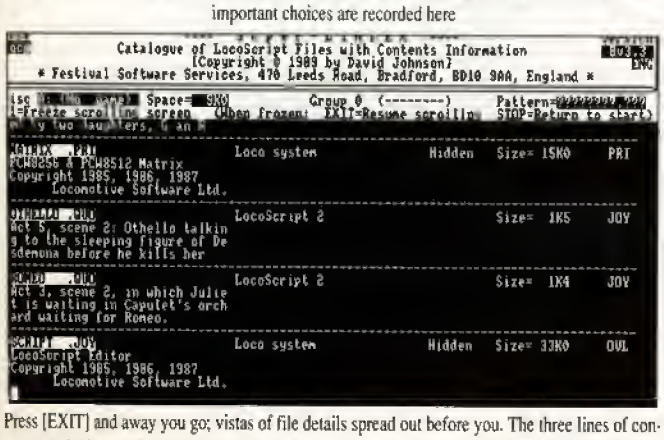
Super Lindex

Ease of use	3.5
Documentation	2.5
Features	4.5
Performance	4.5
8000 Plus value verdict	13.20

Inspecting the rank and file ...



The LocoScript-lookalike [f7] Options menu, easily the hub of Super Lindex. All your most important choices are recorded here



Press [EXIT] and away you go; vistas of file details spread out before you. The three lines of content particulars on the left-hand side echo the information recorded in the **Identity Text** facility

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Our Daily Bread

Nick Vandome shows you how to get your articles accepted in the national daily newspapers

When I first began writing, my one overriding ambition was not for hitherto undreamed of fame and fortune – I rely on the football pools for that – but rather seeing my name attached to an article in a national newspaper. Realistically, I imagined this would coincide roughly with the time that Halley's Comet made its next appearance in our skies or, at best, when my hair was going grey and my teeth were beginning to fall out.

Undeterred nonetheless, I sat down in front of the keyboard and began bashing away at my Amstrad PCW; I sent my first two efforts to *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*, mainly out of curiosity, it has to be said, as to how these seemingly impenetrable markets would go about ridiculing my priceless prose. To say that I was surprised when not one, but both newspapers wrote back saying they wanted to use the pieces would scarcely do my somewhat dramatic reaction justice (stunned and stupified would be closer to the mark). Since then I have revived myself with smelling salts, written more material for national newspapers and realised that, contrary to my original belief, this is a market that is open to all writers. I look at it like this. If I can do it, there's no reason that anybody else can't.

Picking your paper

When contemplating a written assault on the national press the most important considerations are, what to write and who to write it for. Initially, your choice of market shoud be the national newspaper that you read most frequently, be it *The Times* or *The* 'Super Soaraway' *Sun*. The advantages of this are that you will know the style of the newspaper and you will probably have a greater interest in the subjects tackled within the paper's specialist pages. There's a lot of truth in the old adage that an interested writer is usually an interesting one.

As to what to write for the nationals there is such a wide range of specialist pages these days (some of them are like mini-encyclopedias) that there is no excuse for a writer not to be able to find a topic that appeals to his/her artistic (or otherwise) sensibilities.

The Guardian is probably the best bet in this regard and has sections on travel, education, the environment, the media, motoring, young people, computing, and grassroots (anything outside

IT'S A FICKLE OLD BUSINESS

WHEN people ask me what one word I would use to sum up writing for national newspapers (a question that does not pop up incredibly frequently it must be said) I invariably reply 'fickle'. You never really know from one article to the next what the reaction is going to be; you may have had ten consecutive articles rejected by one editor and then one enthusiastically accepted, and conversely, after several acceptances, you may have one returned for no apparent reason. One of my experiences with *The Daily Telegraph* is a perfect example of the up and down existence you can expect from the nationals.

The instance concerned an article I wrote about conservation on the Great Barrier Reef. While I was in Australia I wrote to the travel editor, Bernice Davison, asking if she would be interested in seeing the piece. She wrote back saying that they had enough material covering that part of the world at the moment. Fair enough.

A couple of months later I was back in the UK and sent the idea to the Telegraph's environment page editor. I was more than a touch suprised when I heard back from Bernice Davison saying that the letter had been passed on to her and she thought it would fit into a series she was planning on the travel pages. She then accepted the article and I thought happily that was that. Not so fast though.

Two weeks later Bernice wrote saying that the environment page was having an article written by a staff writer that covered very similar ground to my piece and so she would be unable to use it after all. After some vehement cursing at the injustice of it all I put it down to the ups and downs of dealing with the national press – and then sold the piece to a conservation magazine the next week.

London), to name but a few. All these sections take freelance contributions and I have written for three of them.

Another regular contributor to *8000 Plus*, Mike Gerrard, recently had a piece published in the computing pages about producing his own book on an Amstrad PCW (*We published a similar feature in the March issue of the magazine; see page ??. Ed*). All the other nationals have similar departments and so there should be something to tickle the fancy of even the most choosy scribe.

If after writing your article you draw an initial blank with your own favourite national, then move on to one of similar type. However, just because you are aiming at an equivalent publication it does not mean that you should just change the address on the outgoing envelope. Buy the newspaper for at least a week and do all the things that are a bit tedious in writing, but very necessary; study style, use of language and article length. Having done this send off your article again and if it is returned then repeat the process. If this still brings no joy then Do Not Pass Go, Do Not Collect £200 but deploy your writer's thick skin and go back to square one and write another article.

If you have researched your markets thoroughly, chosen an original topic and written about it concisely - not inc onsiderable 'if's it has to be said - then sooner or later the chances are that you will land on Mayfair.

Dealing with editors

The question of initial contact with editors is a choice between sending in your complete article, writing an outline letter or phoning. If it is your first encounter with an editor, then I would suggest that you send in a finished example of your work. Despite what some people think, it will be read and even if it is not used, it will give the editor some idea of your style. It may lead to your next article being accepted.

Once an editor is familiar with your work, then it is better to send in a query letter than to phone. This is because ideas usually look better on paper once they have been thought out instead of being garbled down the phone and it gives the editor time to dwell on the idea and maybe find some different possibilities in it. He or she is not likely to take too kindly to any verbal badgering.

Whatever happens, if you get any kind of encouragement from an editor, then take it as such; editors on national newspapers do not say friendly things just to make people feel better. My recent experience with *The Scotsman* shows how it is worthwhile taking an encouraging word at face value.

A couple of years ago I had a short article published in *The Scotsman* but then my next half dozen attempts amassed several impersonal, form rejection slips. I had almost given up having anything published by them again when the features editor said that he had found one of my articles very interesting but the topic had just been covered a few months earlier. I was encouraged. My next attempt met with a similar response and I remained encouraged. Then, third time lucky, I had an article accepted – confirming my belief that the editor's comments had been sincere and that he really had been interested.

The black cat factor

From my own experience with the nationals, I think my articles have been accepted for a variety of reasons. One of these is certainly luck but this could also be described as 'being in the right place at the right time' – I sold one travel piece to *The Telegraph* because the country I was writing about, Zimbabwe, was considered to be the flavour of the month in the UK at that particular time.

But, as is the case with most things, you have to make your own luck in the writing world and create your own place and time: if an article is rejected once, it does not mean it will not be accepted by the next editor you try. Remember, intimidating as they may seem, editors of national newspapers are real people who have differing tastes and differing requirements for their pages.

I sent one piece to eight different nationals and, thanks to encouragement from *The Sunday Times*, I eventually placed it with a new adventure magazine. Persistence, even if it does cost a bit in postage, is well worth the effort in the long run.

However, leaving things entirely to chance is not a cast-iron guarantee of success and I always try to abide by a few basic rules.

DO: Be professional. When dealing with top flight markets you have to make sure that the editors only have your writing to consider and no outside distractions such as poor spelling or presentation – typed, double-spacing with wide margins should go without saying. Also, find out the names of the individual editors – it only takes a phone call and it creates a much better impression.

DO: Be confident. If you have faith in what you are doing, then this will translate itself into your writing. Don't feel you have to apologise for sending material to the nationals.

DO: Take advantage of any pieces that are published in the nationals. Make copious amounts of photocopies and, after sending them to friends, relations and your favourite auntie's cat, use them to start building up a portfolio of your work. This will be a great help when approaching other markets.

DON'T: Over-write. Keep your sentences short, and as informative as possible. Nationals have very limited space so you must make every word count. I try and keep features to 1000 words or less. Editors will sub your copy down if necessary but they prefer not to if avoidable.

I recently had an article returned from *The Guardian* with the comment, 'The problem is that you waste valuable space with too much discursive comment.' I took this to mean that I had been waffling. Point taken.

DON'T: Submit pieces with which you are not totally satisfied. No writer will never believe that they have written a perfect piece but if you feel you have not done yourself justice then don't send it to anyone; it will just come straight back again and probably spoil your chances with that editor in the future too.

DON'T: Look at the morning newspaper and think, 'I could have written that'. Remember that the nationals do take articles from new and unknown writers. So, whatever you do, don't get discouraged. Just sit down and do it! ●

AND NOW FOR THE NEWS

ONE area rarely considered where national newspapers are concerned is the possibility of freelance news contributions. And there is probably a good reason for this: the openings are few and far between, you won't get a byline and the money will not exactly ensure early retirement. However, it can be done.

In general, newspapers rely on recognised correspondents (stringers) for their national news and if you have a news story then it is best to get in touch with the one nearest your area (phone the paper and find out where this is).

Mr R Stephens, an assistant news editor at *The Daily Telegraph*, summed up their attitude to news contributions. "Speaking just from the news side, we only accept freelance contributions from accredited correspondents unless they have been vouched for by members of our staff or other correspondents. This is to guard for accuracy. We accept stories from non-accredited sources on a tip basis and these have to be checked out by a member of our staff.

"All items of news provided they have a national interest and not just a purely local one are welcomed by this desk – whether they get in the paper is up to the sub-editors. Stories can range from major fires and murders to environmental issues like the disappearance of marshland to make way for housing. We use a considerable amount of stories filed by our local stringers every day.

"As regards payment, we normally pay a minimum of £15 for a paragraph inside the paper and payments range between £20 and £50 for up to a third of a column. For page leads we pay around £90 but this figure can be increased depending on the strength of the story and we would naturally pay more for items used on the front page."

So unless you have always wanted to be a freelance news-hound, or you discover that your local MP is building a nuclear missile in his back garden, it may be rather hard work trying to make a living from freelance news contributions.

Folding stuff

Prestige is not the only consideration when writing for the nationals; the money is also an important factor. You can expect to get a minimum of £100 per 1000 words but in reality it is likely to be much higher. I have been paid £100 for a 600 word article and £180 for one of 700 words. For top features and exclusives, the sky's the limit.

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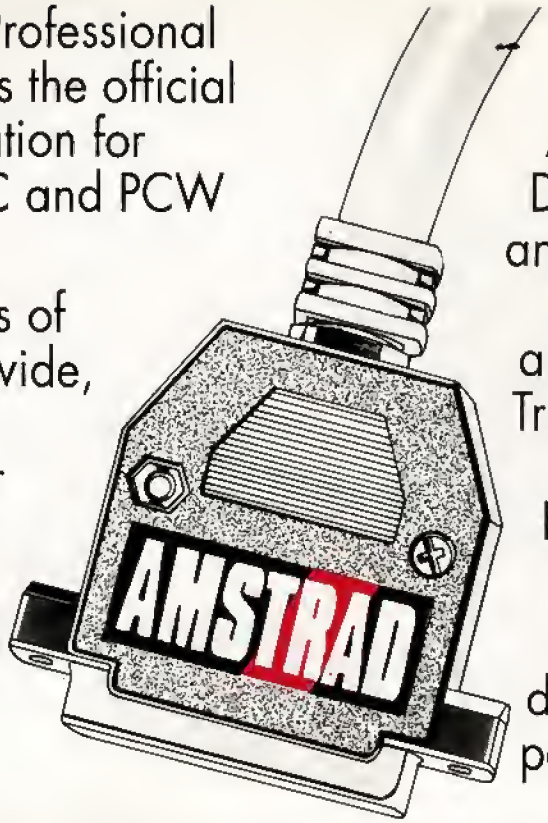

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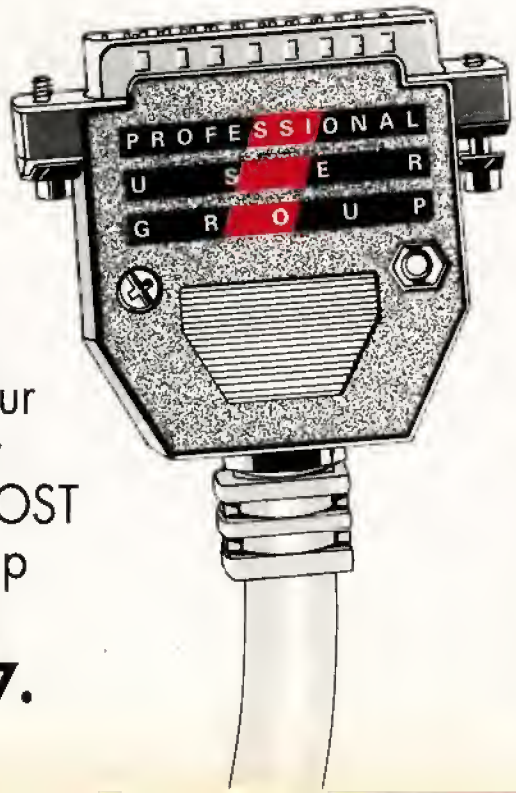

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The result of many years research into the Football Pools by the programmer Martin Evans of C.C.S., the program is a masterpiece of expertise, and is simplicity itself to use.

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Fully experienced Graphologists can charge almost what they like for a full analysis, so this could prove a very lucrative business venture for you.

We must however stress, that unless you are experienced in graphology, then we can in no way guarantee the accuracy of the information that the program provides. If you are an enthusiastic amateur or just curious, then this program could provide hours of entertainment, whilst teaching you the finer art of this fascinating subject.

The text within THE GRAPHOLOGIST was researched and written by a top London graphologist/criminologist James Woodward. The software was written by Martin Evans our consultant software writer.

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A GOOD COVER STORY?
Part II

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.....THE HOME?

You've paid a lot of money for your PCW and you know that disc drives are for the sole purpose of reading information contained on discs. But children don't know that. Which is why they insist on stuffing half eaten Curly-Wurlys into drives A and B when you're not looking. This will not be a problem when Cadbury's produce their first word processing software - but in the meantime....

Then, of course, there's your neighbour. He's the guy who has been everywhere and done everything ranging from crossing the North Pole on roller skates to finding the exit from a multi - storey car park without the use of a map and compass. Naturally, he's also an electronics expert which explains why every time he pops in to borrow something he proceeds to hammer away at your PCW keyboard with hands Frank Bruno would envy. "Ere mate, what happens if I bang this button?" Answers on a postcard to the nearest PCW repair centre.

So, how can you protect your valuable hardware from the contents of the drinks cabinet, chocolate covered kids and marauding neighbours? Simple. Order a three piece matching set of covers manufactured from top quality tear proof, water resistant nylon fabric - that will give them something to think about! Sets are also available for the 9512 with sheet feeder. Just mail, telephone or fax your order to us and we'll despatch it same day with invoice attached. If you are not completely satisfied just return the covers to us within seven days. NOTHING TO PAY UNLESS YOU DECIDE TO KEEP THEM.

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Book Look

Is your Amstrad amicable? Sophie Lankenau finds out

YOUR FRIENDLY AMSTRAD

WORD PROCESSING ON THE AMSTRAD PCW 8256 & 8512

by Daphne Macara £9.95 Published by Pandor House Publications Tel : 081 979 3060

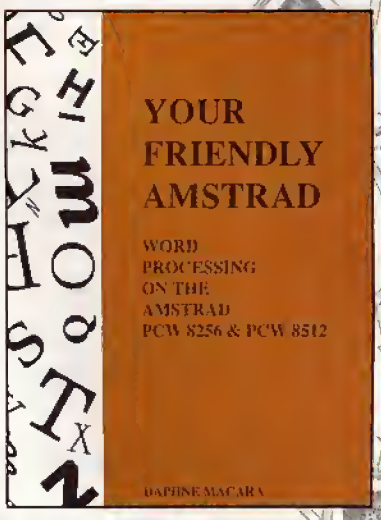
8000 PLUS VALUE VERDICT = Reasonable

ISBN 871248 000

Three notes of encouragement welcome the reader to this book. The title offers comfort to the hitherto hair-tearing student, and the book's spiral bound form is ideal for following step by step instructions. The third, and most heart-warming of all is the contents page, where the 'HELP' section lists no fewer than 52 possible problems. Daphne Macara is obviously no stranger to the complexities of the learning process, and her experience has led her to write 'Your Friendly Amstrad' with benevolence in mind.

The book comprises seven sections, starting with 'Finding your way around LocoScript'. All 'jargon' (which, claims the author, goes with computing 'like whisky and soda or sugar and spice') is italicised and explained in a glossary later on. There is a thorough guide to keyboard navigation, and to fundamentals such as starting up and disc formatting. The section ends with a page of 'hints, tips and wrinkles' – and it is here that you are in for something of a shock.

You have mastered the perfunctory tasks, and are ready to step gingerly into an association with the workings of the program. Suddenly, you read the words "How to keep an eye on slow payers" followed by details on carrying out elementary credit control using LocoScript 1. This might come as rather a surprise, since you do not yet know how to create a document. The best policy is to assume that the sentence is in a time warp, and has simply strayed from its proper place, which is surely in a later chapter of the book.



As you continue, it seems that such information was not alone when it hopped into the tardis. Before you know it, the tutorial tumbles into a series of instructions which demand foreknowledge beyond your wildest fears. You are exposed to such horrors (or so they seem at the time) as cut and paste, tabulation and mail-merging – it's like starting your first day at infant school and finding that your mother has dropped you outside the local sixth form college by mistake.

This is not to say that the information is poorly written – on the contrary, everything is very clearly explained and would be understandable if it had come later in the book. However, the 'sectioning' implied by the contents page does not exist. Although all relevant information is grouped together, there are no chapter headings to discriminate between topics.

Fortunately, when you do reach the LocoScript 1 course, it is a reward worth waiting for. Twelve easy to manage sessions take you through from document creation to printing. As each session is generally restricted to one page, information is conveyed with economy, precision, and a fair amount of humour. Regular summaries provide a handy reminder on your level of progress.

If you could open up the spiral bind and reshuffle the pages, Daphne Macara's 'Your Friendly Amstrad' would be a near perfect way of breaking the ice on your relationship with technology. As it is, poor organisation and irritating typing errors make you wonder whether with friends like these, you will ever need enemies. ●

LEARNING TO LOVE YOUR AMSTRAD

WORD PROCESSING ON THE AMSTRAD PCW 9512

by Daphne Macara £10.95 Published by Pandor House Publications Tel : 081 979 3060

8000 PLUS VALUE VERDICT = Good

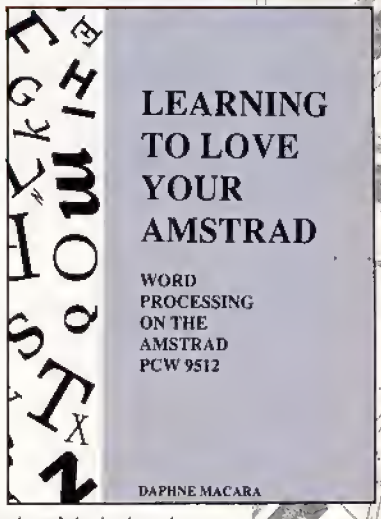
IBSN 871248 019

When you open this book and discover that 54 pages will elapse before you reach a step by step guide to LocoScript 2, do not be alarmed. If you are a newcomer to both the Amstrad PCW 9512 and LocoScript 2, you will be better advised to map your own route through the book, ignoring the itinerary suggested by the contents page. In doing so, you will quickly see evidence of how the author makes the prospect of learning to love your Amstrad a distinctly inviting affair.

The plight of the beginner is not completely overlooked in the early stages; you will be greeted by a page devoted to jargon explanation, and a whistle-stop tour of the disc management screen. There follows a list of 'do's and don'ts', including invaluable advice about disc handling. The section on 'Tip Top Tips' is not for the fainthearted; it is here that the complete novice should consider turning straight to the LocoScript 2 course to avoid confronting information which is likely to scare them off.

The course itself treats the newcomer to an opening preamble entitled 'Absolute Beginners', taking you swiftly through starting up, using the LocoScript 2 disc, and formatting your own 'data' disc. Some sound advice follows: 'The only way to do it is to DO it'; this translates roughly into a command to stop dipping your toe in the water and to dive straight in.

You may well learn to love your Amstrad PCW more quickly than you thought when you find that it comes bundled with LocoMail and LocoSpell. Macara's tutorial sensibly gives space for a walkthrough on both of these utilities. The Locomail section shows you how to set up a datafile, and includes tips on creating circulars and sales letters. Four pages on LocoSpell demonstrate the use of the dictionary, proof reader, and the program's capacity to let you build up a dictionary of your own.



Some pieces of advice in the tutorial leave you with a sense of rather blank optimism. For example, the author's sole response to your being greeted with the statement "File does not exist" on the screen is that 'It may be that the computer is just feeling lazy and can't be bothered to look for it'. Whilst the reader is comforted by the book's attempt to humanise technology, the notion that from time to time the computer simply puts its keyboard up and has a quick tea break is slightly disconcerting.

'Learning to Love your Amstrad' is a workmanlike study of the machine and its accompanying software. The absence of both screenshots and clear chapter headings does leave you feeling rather lost, but the style of writing in this book welcomes even the most hesitant of beginners. Quirks such as the WYSIWYG (What you see is what you get) and the 'Y' (don't ask yourself why you are doing things, just do them) theories are always a joy to read. These, together with the book's user friendly content, might help you decide between starting a beautiful relationship with your machine, or hurling it out of the window. ●

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LISTINGS

We proudly present a BASIC programming tool to help you take the grind from debugging.

BELTER.BAS by P.Whelerton

The March issue saw us set a competition to find a program which would aid our readers when typing in listings. After an initially, shall we say, less than enthusiastic response, the programs began to come in. So, before we print Mr Whelerton's winning effort we should give honourable mentions to Jason Sharpe, Mr P Edwards, S Orr, and Max Richardson. Mr Sharpe's entry ran an exceedingly close second and was only pipped at the post by its length – we would not be at all surprised to see it in the shops before too long, or at least in the Public Domain.

Mr Whelerton's program, although long, does include listings of GOTOs, GOSUBs and PRINT statements and can be altered to include other BASIC commands and functions. Its reports, though not as detailed as Mr Sharpe's give all the details of variables (both string, array and numeric) and commands/statements.

BELTER.BAS is 120 lines long, a little longer than we normally like but this is a special occasion and the program was sent in before we put any restraints on the number of lines.

After you have typed it in, and debugged it, you will be asked which drive the program to be checked is to be found on. Your answer must be in the form M:, A: or B: – don't forget to include the colons. When asked to provide the filename do not include the suffix .BAS as the program assumes this. Mr Whelerton can explain the rest in his own words ...

"The program is designed to take BASIC programs and produce lists of the following information:

The total number of lines in the program
The total number of Numeric and String variables
The total number of REM, PRINT, GOSUB and GOTO statements.

The above are accompanied by lists of line references. Also produced are details on all numeric and string variables including:

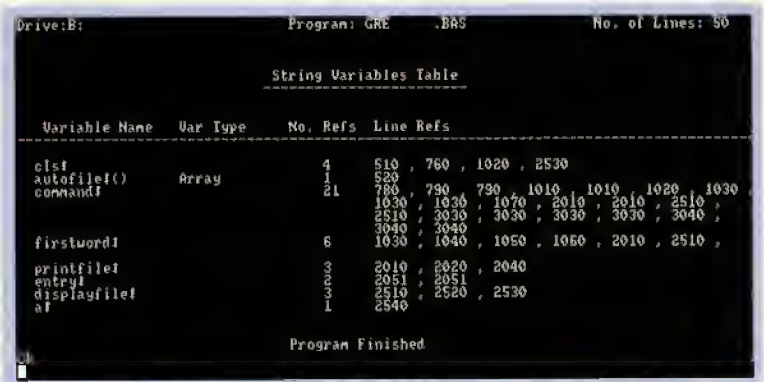
The name of each variable
The type of each variable (array, function and so on)
The total number of references made to each variable
A list of all references by line number.

The program is fairly simple to use as most of the work is done by the computer. If the filename entered cannot be found then the program beeps (CHR$(7)) and the input will be requested again. The program will then display that it is searching the file and will show the line number it is currently examining at the bottom of the screen. If at any point the user wishes to halt the search, simply press X (there will be a short delay before anything happens) and the program will jump straight to showing the details of variables. The output is split over three screens and requires the user to press the space bar to move on once they have read the current screen. The three tables are as follows:

1 ... The total number of variables and statements
2 ... Details of all numeric variables
3 ... Details of all string variables

Tables numbered two and three may contain more information than can fit on one screen. In this case the user will have to press a key to move onto another section of this screen."

So, there we have it. Well done to Mr Whelerton and many thanks to all the other people who sent in listings. ●



BELTER.BAS, the March competition winner gives the 'slave' program from our Mallard BASIC article on pages 32 and 33 a good seeing to. Here the string variables are shown

```
10 CLEAR: l=FRE(""): e$=CHR$(27): cl$=e$+"E"+e$+"H"                    1135
20 DEF FNat$(X,Y)=E$+"Y"+CHR$(X+32)+CHR$(Y+32)                         0FFF
30 MAXi=40: occ=36: maxinsts=172: no1=0                                13EA
40 DIM n$(2,maxi),lr(2,maxi,occ),vp(6),lp(2,maxi),vc(2,maxi),ol(4,occ) 1F57
50 DIM vc$(5), in$(maxinsts): FOR f=1 TO 5: READ vc$(f): NEXT f        1BB7
60 FOR f = 1 TO maxinsts: READ in$(f): NEXT f                          1548
70 DATA "Function","Integer","Array","Integer Array",""                1B4D
80 DATA "ABS","ADDKEY","ADDREC","ALL","AND"                            12B2
90 DATA "AS","ASC","ATN","BASE","BUFFERS"                              110B
100  DATA "CALL","CHAIN","CHR$","CINT","CLEAR"                         14AA
110  DATA "CLOSE","COMMON","CONSOLIDATE"                               1380
120 DATA "CONT","COS","CREATE","CONT","COS"                            14C8
130 DATA "CREATE","CSNG","CVD","CVI","CVIK"                            146C
140 DATA "CVS","CVUK","DATA","DEC$","DEF"                              0ED4
150 DATA "DEFBL","DEFINT","DEFSEG","DEFSNG"                            1308
160 DATA "DEFSTR","DELETE","DELKEY","DIM"                              120D
170 DATA "DIR","DISPLAY","ELSE","END","EOF"                            13CA
180 DATA "EQV","ERA","ERASE","ERL","ERR","ERROR"                       1146
190 DATA "EXP","FETCHKEY$","FETCHRANK"                                 1174
```

The initialisation of the program variables and User Defined functions are carried out here. Although most people do call the User Defined function for positioning the cursor FNat$ meaning define the cursor at ... (seen here in line 20) it can in fact be called anything you so wish. The beginnings of a great deal of laborious to type DATA lines are also to be found here

```
200 DATA "FETCHREC","FIELD","FILES","FIND$","FIX"                    134D
210 DATA "FN","FOR","FRE","GET","GOSUB"                              0E6E
220 DATA "GOTO","HEX$","HIMEM","IF","IMP","INKEY$"                   143C
230 DATA "INP","INPUT","INPUT$","INPW"                               1295
240 DATA "INSTR","INT","KILL","LEFT$","LEN","LET"                    16A7
250 DATA "LINE","LLIST","LOAD","LOC"                                 116F
260 DATA "LOCK","LOF","LOG","LOG10","LOWER$","LPOS"                  14F9
270 DATA "LPRINT","LSET","MAX","MEMORY"                              13C0
280 DATA "MERGE","MID$","MIN","MKI$","MKIK$","MKS$"                  1570
```

The DATA is held in the variable **in$** - this was dimensioned earlier in line 60. The bound of this array is held in the constant, **maxinsts**. The DATA obviously comprises all the BASIC built-in commands and functions. If you so wish you can erase any functions from this list which you are sure that you will never use.

```
290 DATA "MKUK$","MOD","NAME","NEXT"                                 1030
300 DATA "NEW","NOT","OCT$","ON","OPEN","OPTION"                     1203
310 DATA "OR","OUT","OUTW","PEEK","POKE"                             0E95
320 DATA "POS","PRINT","PUT","RANDOMIZE","RANKSPEC"                  18C5
330 DATA "READ","REM","REN","RESET"                                  0D80
340 DATA "RESTORE","RESUME","RETURN","RIGHT$"                        15D3
350 DATA "RND","ROUND","RSET","RUN","SAVE"                           123E
360 DATA "SEEKKEY","SEEKNEXT","SEEKPREV"                             1439
370 DATA "SEEKRANK","SEEKREC","SEEKSET","SGN"                        159F
380 DATA "SIN","SPACE$","SPC","SQR","STEP","STOP"                    1488
```

The bounds for the arrays which hold the variable names and the line numbers of their occurrences are also constants (**maxi** and **occ**). **maxi** denotes the maximum number of different variables which the program can deal with. **occ** denotes the maximum number of references to a variable that the program can log. Both can be changed but memory might become tight so watch out!

```
390 DATA "STR$","STRING$","STRIP$","SWAP"                            114F
400 DATA "SYSTEM","TAB","TAN","THEN","TO"                            12BF
410 DATA "TYPE","UNT","UPPER$","USING","USR"                         15A7
420 DATA "VAL","VARPTR","VERSION","WAIT"                             1365
430 DATA "WAITW","WEND","WHILE","WIDTH","WRITE"                      17DC
440 DATA "XOR","ZONE","Numeric Variables"                            1348
450 DATA "String Variables","Rem Statements"                         16ED
460 DATA "Print Statements","Gosub Calls","Goto Calls"               1BB6
470 DIM tt$(6): FOR f=1 TO 6: READ tt$(f): NEXT f: GOSUB 490: GOSUB 580   1C09
480 GOSUB 990:PRINT: PRINT: PRINT: PRINT TAB(33);"Program Finished":END   24D2
```

The DATA goes on and on. So, while you're typing it all in, here are the meanings of some of the program variables; **bot** holds the location during the binary search, **tt$** holds the title of each type of word searched for, 1= numeric, 2=string, 3=REM, 4=PRINT, 5=GOSUB, 6=GOTO, **vp** is the variable name pointer which holds how many variables/instructions have been found so far

```
490 PRINT cl$;FNat$(4,20);"--- Basic Program Analyser by P.Whelerton ---" 2187
500 PRINT FNat$(9,25);"Please input drive name (A/B/M) ";: INPUT d$       1F3B
510 d$=UPPER$(d$)                                                        057E
520 PRINT FNat$(14,25);"Please input the filename : ";: INPUT f$         1E17
530 IF LEN(f$)>8 THEN f$=LEFT$(f$,8)                                     0CF6
540 f$=UPPER$(f$)+STRING$(8-LEN(f$)," ")+".BAS"                          0F8A
550 PRINT FNat$(14,24);"Please be patient: Program Searching          "  1EDD
560 PRINT FNat$(17,18);"Press X to abort (totals shown after a delay)"   21FE
570 OPEN "R",1,d$+f$,1: FIELD 1,1 AS a$: RETURN                          11A5
580 GET #1: WHILE ASC(a$)<>26 AND UPPER$(x$)<>"X":qu=0: ln=0: nol=nol+1  1EBE
590 WHILE a$>="0" AND a$<="9": ln = ln * 10 + ASC(a$) - 48: GET #1: WEND 17F3
600 PRINT FNat$(20,42);"       ";FNat$(20,38);"Line ";ln                 13D5
```

Lines 500-580 request the drive and filename from you. Once the file is found (using FIND$) it is opened as a Random Access file with a record length of 1 character which is held in the variable **a$**. This enables one character to be read at a time.

How to type in listings

This is is where we lead you gently into the free software which came with your PCW and which should give you years of enjoyment, intellectual (and possibly even financial) profit.

The first thing to do is to dig out the CP/M disc(s) which came with your PCW. You will find a file called BASIC.COM on one of the non-LocoScript discs. Make a copies of the discs and when this is done put the master discs safely away. Now, insert the CP/M disc into the A: drive. You will see the familiar green and black bars heading across the screen. You will then be at the A> prompt of CP/M. Getting into BASIC is simplicity itself, just type BASIC. A small message will be printed on the screen and the A> prompt will be replaced with ok. To find out how friendly BASIC can be type in the following line:

PRINT "Hello My Owner"

Once this is typed in, press [ENTER]. Now for the hard work ... Type the listing in exactly as you see it, pressing [RETURN] at the end of each line. DO NOT type the four character Hexadecimal digits at the end of each line – these relate to the checksum program which we will be repeating in the near future. It is a good idea to type SAVE "BELTER.BAS",a every few lines as this will ensure that you do not lose your work. If you make any mistakes while typing in a line, simply use the cursor and [DEL] keys to rectify it. Once you are happy that everything is typed in correctly SAVE the file again. To see the entire listing type LIST. To see it printed out on paper type LLIST. Once you re-checked it, hold your breath and type the following:

RUN "BELTER.BAS"

If you get a message such as Syntax error on line 40, don't worry, mistakes will happen. Type EDIT 40 (or which ever line the message told you) and check it against the printed listing. We do make every effort to ensure that listings are correct when they are leave the office.

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```
610 WHILE ASC(a$) <> 13: wp=1: w$="": GOSUB 910                              11CE
620 WHILE (ok=0 AND ASC(a$)<>13) OR qu=1: GET #1:GOSUB 910: WEND             1A53
630 IF ASC(a$)=13 THEN GOTO 710 ELSE w$=w$+a$: wp=wp+1: GET #1:GOSUB 930     1DB7
640 IF a$="(" THEN w$=w$+a$:wp=wp+1:GET #1  ELSE IF ok=1 THEN 630            1A8B
650 wp=wp-1: w$=UPPER$(w$): GOSUB 850                                        0FF2
660 IF inset=1 THEN GOSUB 720: GOTO 710                                      11C2
670 w$=LOWER$(w$): l1$=RIGHT$(w$,1): vc=5+3*(l1$="%")                        11FB
680 IF LEFT$(w$,2)="fn" THEN GOSUB 770                                       0FF4
690 IF l1$="(" THEN GOSUB 780                                                0BCF
700 vt=1-(l1$="$"):GOSUB 790                                                 0B86
```

This is the part of the program which does all the work. It works with WHILE...WEND loops, the outer of which runs until the End Of File is reached; this is denoted as CHR$(26). It is also curtailed by the user pressing X. Each line which is read in is also given a reference number. Another, nested, WHILE...WEND loop deals with each character as it is read in.

```
710 WEND: GET #1: GET #1: x$=INKEY$:WEND: RETURN                             1722
720 x=0-(w$="REM")-2*(w$="PRINT")-3*(w$="GOSUB")-4*(w$="GOTO")                15C7
730 IF x>0 THEN GOSUB 760                                                    0B5B
740 IF w$="REM" THEN WHILE ASC(a$)<>13 : GET #1: WEND                        15CC
750 RETURN                                                                   0514
760 vp(x+2)=vp(x+2)+1: ol(x,vp(x+2))=ln: RETURN                              1451
770 w$=MID$(w$,3,wp-3): l1$=RIGHT$(w$,1): vc=1: wp=wp-3: RETURN              1C44
780 l1$=MID$(w$,wp-1,1): w$=w$+")": wp=wp+1: vc=3-(l1$="%"): RETURN          1A85
790 found=0: no=0                                                            082D
800 WHILE NOT(found) AND no<vp(vt): no=no+1: found=n$(vt,no)=w$: WEND        2152
810 IF found THEN lp(vt,no)=lp(vt,no)+1: lr(vt,no,lp(vt,no))=ln: RETURN      2279
820 vp(vt)=vp(vt)+1: n$(vt,vp(vt))=w$ : vc(vt,vp(vt))=vc                     1AF9
830 lp(vt,vp(vt))=lp(vt,vp(vt))+1: lr(vt,vp(vt),lp(vt,vp(vt)))=ln            200C
840 RETURN                                                                   0513
850 top=1: bot=maxinsts                                                      0D92
860 test$=w$: IF RIGHT$(test$,1)="(" THEN test$=LEFT$(test$,wp-1)            1D06
870 WHILE (top<=bot): mid=INT((top+bot)/2)                                   1479
880 IF test$=in$(mid) THEN inset=1: RETURN                                   1595
890 IF in$(mid)<w$ THEN top=mid+1 ELSE bot=mid-1                             16F2
```

Line 770 removed the FN from any user defined function. It then adjusts the word length pointer (wp) and sets the class (vc=1). Line 780 adds an extra bracket to Array Type variables. When supplied with a word known to be an array it sets the class using Boolean values which set vc to show either array or integer array depending on whether the word ended in a % sign

```
900 WEND: inset=0: RETURN                                                    0DEE
910 ok=1: IF ASC(a$)=13 OR a$>"z" OR a$<"A" THEN ok=0                        1405
920 test=(ASC(a$)=34):qu=SGN(test+0.5)*(test+qu): RETURN                     1B38
930 ok=1: IF ASC(a$)=13 OR a$>"z" THEN ok=0                                  119B
940 IF a$<>"%" AND a$<>"$" AND a$<"A" THEN ok = 0                            0F33
950 test=(ASC(a$)=34):qu=SGN(test+0.5)*(test+qu)                             1691
960 RETURN                                                                   051B
970 IF POS(0)>83 THEN PRINT: PRINT TAB(re);:pr=pr+1: RETURN ELSE RETURN      259D
980 PRINT ;CHR$(8);" ": RETURN                                               0CFD
990 vt$="Drive:"+d$+SPACE$(24)+"Program: "+f$                                12A2
1000 tv$=SPACE$(15)+"No. of Lines:"+STR$(nol):t$=vt$+tv$                     1A02
1010 PRINT cl$;t$;FNat$(4,4);"Name Of Type      Occur'nces   Line Refs"      1EB1
1020 PRINT STRING$(85,"-"): PRINT: pr=0: re=32: FOR f=1 TO 6                 19AD
```

This section uses the flag **ok** to show whether an end-of-word character has been found. It is almost like the routine in 780 except that the symbols $,%,and (are allowed since they determine the type of variables. A quote ("") check is also included.

```
1030 PRINT TAB(4);tt$(f);TAB(25);vp(f);TAB(32);                              138C
1040 IF f<3 THEN PRINT: GOTO 1060                                            0E65
1050 FOR g=1 TO vp(f): PRINT ol(f-2,g);",";: GOSUB 970: NEXT: GOSUB 980      1F15
1060 PRINT: NEXT f: re=42                                                    0BE8
1070 FOR n=1 TO 2                                                            06F0
1080 PRINT FNat$(28,21);"Press space bar to see the next screen"             1FDF
1090 k$=INKEY$: IF k$<>" " THEN 1090 ELSE PRINT cl$;t$: pr=10                19CF
1100 PRINT FNat$(4,30);tt$(n);" Table";                                      1088
1110 PRINT FNat$(5,29);STRING$(LEN(tt$(n))+8,"-")                            14D5
1120 PRINT FNat$(8,3);"Variable Name   Var Type     No. Refs  Line Refs"     215F
1130 PRINT STRING$(88,"-"): PRINT: FOR f=1 TO vp(n): PRINT TAB(3);n$(n,f);21BF
1140 PRINT TAB(19);" ";vc$(vc(n,f));TAB(36);lp(n,f);TAB(re);                 176A
1150 FOR g=1 TO lp(n,f):PRINT lr(n,f,g);",";: GOSUB 970: NEXT: GOSUB 980    1F4E
```

The tables with all the hard-won information are output within these lines and the small boc which follows on the next page. Obviously you can jazz the screen display up as much as you like. As it stands, however, the program is an excellent piece of software to have in your collection. If you don't already have a programming aid you will find yourself using this more and more

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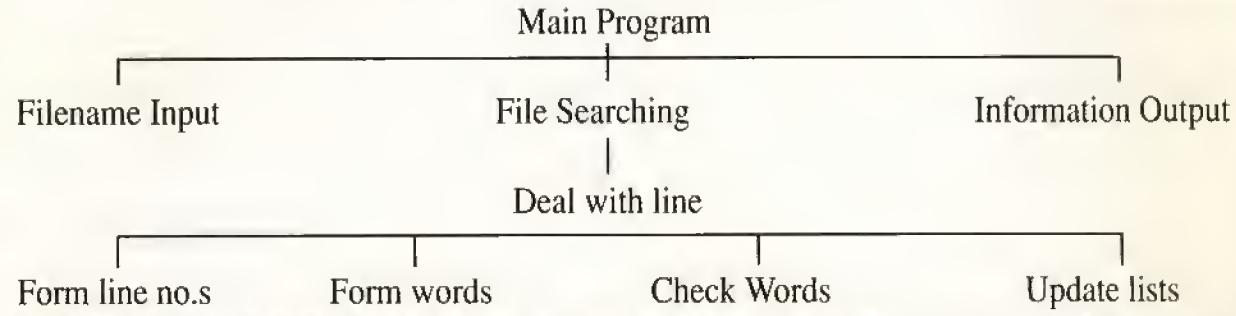
```
1160 pr=pr+1: GOSUB 1170: PRINT FNat$(pr,0);:NEXT f: NEXT n : RETURN      1F64
1170 IF pr<25 OR f=vp(n) THEN RETURN ELSE pr=10                            1585
1180 PRINT FNat$(28,22);"Press space bar to see this list continued"       223B
1190 k$="": WHILE k$<>" ": k$=INKEY$: WEND: PRINT FNat$(10,0);             18B8
1200 FOR 1=1 TO 19: PRINT STRING$(90," "):NEXT 1: RETURN                   18F2
```

That's it then, all the hard work is over and now the 'enjoyable' bit begins (no we're not getting weird over this). Debugging a program will teach you more about programming than any amount of typing in listing after listing. It will also teach you to build in specific error traps for your own work.



Just to show you how we appreciate good documentation, and the fact that we are trying to improve the general quality of the information provided in the Listings Plus pages, we have included Mr Whelerton's schematic diagram for BELTER.BAS (shown above). Making up a schematic before doing any coding is an excellent idea. It means that, in six months' time, you know one end of your magnum opus from the other. It also helps other people to understand your thought processes ... thanks again to Mr Whelerton for the incredibly detailed documentation he provided.

To the lighthouse

That should actually be to the Lifeboat due to the fact that this little piece concerns the RNLI charity and more BASIC tools. A small company based in Cornwall called Luxysoft produces a package by the name of BASIC Needs.

This disc contains several tools including one called FRED – the FRiendly EDitor – which enables you to program your BASIC files in the comfort of near word processor peace. It also makes RPED.BAS (the packaged editor which comes with your PCW) look like Genghis Khan with a migraine on Monday morning. Had it not been for sale already, it and its companion program FLAP (Full Label Analysis Print – it used to be called XPSS) would have won the competition hands down. In fact we reviewed it last month and gave it an 8000 Plus Value Verdict of 16/20.

So, if you would like to spend £9.95, £5 of which goes to the RNLI, and have some essential programming tools to hand you should call Malcom Surl at Luxsoft on 0726 850820. It's all for a good cause and it's definitely a good disc to have in your collection.

MINIWORD.BAS by Adam Smith

Having just enough space at the end of this month's Listing Plus pages, we have decided to include this wonderful little utility from Adam Smith (no we don't stoop to economical jokes at other people's expense).

What you have here is a tiny little word processor. The purpose of MINI-WORD.BAS is to enbable you to jot down a few notes while in BASIC.

All you do is type away and, like direct printing in LocoScript, once you press return everything is printed it out. Very handy indeed.

You could even use it straight (well not too straight) from CP/M if you incorporate the listing in a file with a **.SUB** suffix. Something like the following would do the job:

BASIC MINIWORD.BAS

Create this using a word processor and save it as a file called JOTTER.SUB. Then whenever you're in CP/M all you have to do is type JOTTER as the A> prompt.

You could improve the program by enabling it to save your typed text as a disc file which could be read back at a later date.

But as it stands right now, MINI-WORD.BAS is an effective little beast which should make CP/Ming and BASIC that little bit less like being in a foreign land with no way to write home.

If anyone else can come up with a better attempt at a BASIC jotter we'd certainly be very pleased to see it. ●

```
10 PRINT CHR$(27);"E":left%=8:right%=88:width%=right%-left%                1B7B
20 LPRINT CHR$(27);"l";CHR$(left%);CHR$(27);"m";"1";                       12D8
30 LPRINT CHR$(27);"p";"1";CHR$(24);                                       0DE5
40 PRINT "TYPE AWAY!!";                                                    0AAD
50 IF p%<>0 THEN PRINT " (YOU ARE STILL ON THE SAME LINE)" ELSE PRINT      2142
60 PRINT:LINE INPUT x$:PRINT                                               0F6F
70 l%=1:len%=LEN(x$):x%=MIN(l%+width%-p%,len%)                             1365
```

As opposed to clearing the screen and sending the cursor home using CHR$(27)+"H", Mr Smith has decided to leave you writing at the bottom of the screen. Various type styles and fancy bits are set up and the ready message "Type Away" is set up for you. Line 60 waits for the words.

```
80 WHILE x%=l%+width%-p%                                                   09CD
90 WHILE ASC(MID$(x$,x%,1))<>32:x%=x%-1:WEND                               14F9
100 LPRINT MID$(x$,l%,x%-l%)                                               0AEC
110 l%=x%+1:x%=MIN(l%+width%,len%):p%=0:WEND                               1234
120 LPRINT MID$(x$,l%);:IF len%=255 THEN p%=len%-l%+1 ELSE LPRINT:p%=0     1F6D
130 GOTO 40                                                                046B
```

You can only type 255 characters at one time, but don't worry, after this limit is reached you can print out your text and you will still remain on the same sentence. As yet the program has no exit routine so you will have to press the jolly old [STOP] button to get out. Another addtion would be a word wrap facility for on-screen work.

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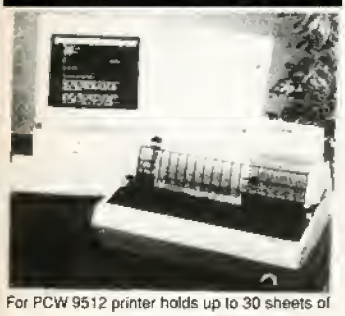

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LANGFORD

A page in the company of David Langford

Little Green Mayhem

A great tradition of *8000 Plus* magazine is that when you delve into the most arcane fields of human endeavour — toad-sexing, or science fiction fanzines, or societies for the preservation of fruit-bats — you'll sooner or later find someone chipping away at their mountains of paperwork on a PCW.

Therefore it came as no surprise when Jenny Randles, who is apparently the only full-time professional UFO researcher in Britain, mentioned that her books like *Abduction* (Headline paperback, 1989) are indeed produced using LocoScript 2 on a PCW8256.

At first I was leery of these researches, since UFOlogy can seem such a dubious subject: SPACE ALIENS TURNED MY PCW INTO AN OLIVE, and all that. It was with great relief that I found Jenny to be a leading member of what purely for the sake of argument I'll call the non-loony school of UFO thought.

Here in Britain, UFOlogists of this school suspect that the weirder reports from honest-seeming witnesses (close encounters, abductions, etc.) result from strange mental states. *Not* madness or DTs, but something more like lucid dreaming or those "out of the body experiences" which seem so real to sufferers. This is fascinating stuff which might well provide an insight from an unexpected angle on how the human brain is wired — and how, just like a computer, it can go into unintended loops, or even crash from time to time.

Unfortunately there are problems in holding views like these. The first I could guess; my jaw dropped when I heard about the second.

Short change

The first snag for a sober researcher is that, as Jenny confirms, this kind of UFOlogy won't make you rich. "My 14 books normally clock up about 2000 sales in hardback, with rare paperback excursions — giving my bank balance a status that even Argentina won't envy."

What tends to sell well is hyperbolic stuff about tangible alien spaceships full of little kidnappers with enormous eyes and faces made of putty. This is why UFOlogists in America, where this "extra terrestrial hypothesis" dominates, tend to be wealthier than our home-grown ones.

Personally I have strong opinions about America's best-known UFO pundit, the dreaded Whitley Strieber of *Communion* fame. Jenny will not discuss him at all, owing to the second snag in being an unsensationalist researcher who disputes theories of aliens. This is that moneyed Americans are quite ready to go to court over these issues.

For example, Jenny's and Peter Warrington's *Science and the UFOs* (not a bestseller) is acknowledged by Strieber as a strong influence: almost immediately after reading its account of "UFO abductions", he is supposed to have started remembering the similar experiences whose highly coloured write-up in *Communion* made him rich. When in a radio interview Jenny made the obvious joke about this sequence of events, she was threatened with a libel suit.

Deja vu

Here I must declare an interest. Strieber's new novel *Majestic* devotes two pages to a detailed rehash of the fictional UFO story in my own 1979 spoof, *An Account of a Meeting with Denizens of Another World, 1871*. I was not approached for permission, nor offered a fee for the use of my original creation. But I suppose I'd better not make jokes about it on the radio, had I?

Worse is to follow. An even more bizarre American outgrowth of UFOlogy is the cult of the "MJ-12 papers" — dodgy-looking documents which are supposed to be leaked US government records. They tell a gruesome tale concerning crashed UFOs, autopsies on little green bodies, global cover-up, and much more. This is supposed to have been successfully kept secret by every US administration since the 1940s!

I myself offer whole-hearted support to the document experts who reckon the papers are blatant forgeries, and who quote strong evidence for this view... but I'd better not say so too loudly.

You see, Jenny said so last year. It's a nasty story, offered here as a warning against the perils of talking to the media — which, in order to publicise their books, becomes the duty of most writers sooner or later.

In brief: *The Manchester Evening News* announced (uncritically) a public meeting in which Stanton Friedman, the leading US guru of MJ-12, would preach to the converted. Jenny, who lives nearby, felt she had a responsibility to give the opposing viewpoint. This was dismally written up by the paper as something which could be taken as a personal attack (with jazzy paragraphs starting with ZAP! and POW!). Although Jenny complained at once of being misrepresented, the MJ-12 crew issued writs.

Over the top

This is the point at which I boiled over. For producing the offending piece, the MEN is being asked for £500, and its reporter for nothing. For expressing her dissenting view in what is supposedly a scientific debate, and despite having no control over the distortions which appeared, Jenny is being sued for £10,000.

Which could make her original letter to the *Manchester Evening News* the most expensive brief document ever to be printed out from LocoScript 2 on a PCW...

Surely this is outrageous. As Jenny explained, "This sort of tactic has no place in serious debate on controversial issues.....it must be stamped out. This is why I have an obligation to fight on despite the horrendous difficulties of doing so."

Writers shocked by what they see as persecution have set up a defence fund to help fight this expensive action. (I'm one of them.) Echoing the legendary fund-raisers of *Private Eye* magazine, it's called MJ-BALLS. Cheques made out to this worthy cause are welcomed at 17 Polsloe Road, Exeter, Devon, EX1 2HL. This is a serious appeal.

As for Jenny Randles, her final, rueful comment to me was: "Perhaps the PCW tempts one into trouble because it's so easy to respond quickly to points you dispute - a side -effect your readers might not ever have had cause to contemplate before!" ●

TIPOFFS

The happy couple: you and your PCW

Keep getting hitched in LocoScript? CP/M a consummate failure? Find BASIC isn't the best man for the job?

As June bursts out all over with brides and grooms, pledge your troth to Tipoffs – five pages that tell you, rather engagingly, how you and your Amstrad can live together in blissful harmony. Putting £30 in his bottom drawer this month is Gary Simmons of Surrey for his addressing of an envelope problem, while £10 goes to Nick Morice-Jones of Kent for his very flashy tip, and Ian Chisnall of Bolton who has a tip for all Locochar users.

We pay hard cash (or equivalent in toasters) for good tips, so if you know any goodies in LocoScript, LocoFile, BASIC or any well-known program, tell us at Tipoffs, 8000 Plus, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2XF.

Address making

WINNER

Putting the address in the right place on an envelope is a tricky business – especially as you often have to work with envelopes of varying sizes.

LocoScript's block feature will automatically address envelopes in exactly the right place for you after you've written a letter. Here's what to do: it looks complicated but after dong it once you'll find it very easy.

Before you print or exit the letter document, put the cursor at the beginning of the address of the recipient and press [COPY]. Then move to the end and press [COPY] again, followed by a letter such as Z. Print the letter as usual.

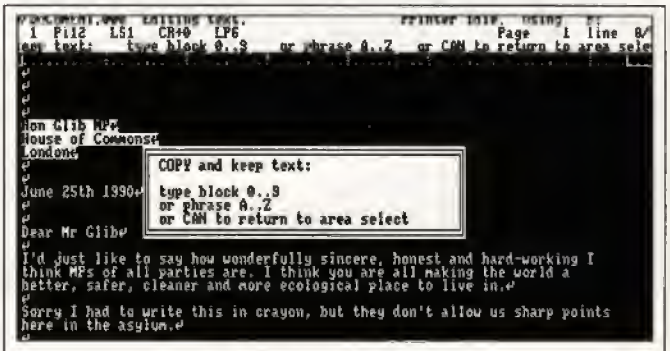
After the letter has finished printing, insert the envelope into the printer. (8256 and 8512 printers can only cope with thin envelopes, and you may have to help it roll in with your fingers). Wind the envelope up until the print head is at the level you want.

LocoScript 1: Press [f1] **'Options'** and using the cursors and the [+] key select **'Single sheet paper'**. [ENTER]. Then press [f3] **'Actions'** and type in a left offset of about 30 then [ENTER]. The print head moves across to that setting. If it's at the wrong place for the address, type in another figure and [ENTER] until you get it where you want it.

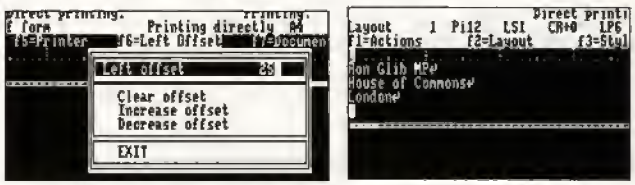
LocoScript 2: Press [f3] **'Paper'** and using the cursors and the [+] key select 'A4'. [ENTER]. Then press [f6] **'Left offset'** and type in a left offset of about 30 then [ENTER]. The print head moves across to that setting. If it's at the wrong place for the address, type in another figure and [ENTER] until you get it where you want it.

Now clear the printer status line with [EXIT] and press D in the disc manager for **'direct printing'.** When the direct printing screen comes up press [PASTE] Z; the address appears. Press [RETURN] and it is printed in the right place on the envelope. Leave direct printing with [EXIT].

Gary Simmons, Epsom



Copy the address from the top of the letter...



...set the left offset to align the print head where you want it on the envelope, paste in the address, hit [RETURN], and the envelope is addressed in the right place

MIDI systems

I was surprised to read in Tipoffs recently of MIDI interfaces for the PCW. I have a Yamaha keyboard which is MIDI compatible. What do I need to control it with my PCW? Will I be able to edit the waveform of my synthesiser with it?

Mike Overton, North Walsham, Norfolk

8000 PLUS: *For anyone unfamiliar with the concept of MIDI, and computer-controlled music in general, a few words of explanation first.*

MIDI – Musical Instrument Digital Interface – makes your PCW into a music processor. Suppose you connect a synthesiser to your PCW via a cable and MIDI interface, which plugs in the back of your machine, and play a tune; your PCW stores the line you've just played on disc, and now you can use MIDI software to do various things. You can have the line played back to you, transpose it up or down at the touch of a key, loop it so it plays repeatedly, play it back faster or slower and so on.

By playing this back and recording another line as you listen to it you can build up tracks which will play back together – building up an orchestra of sounds from each single line. Individual lines can be altered, so if you don't like the bass part you've laid down on your demo tape you can re-record it without touching the other lines. A boon for pop musicians and students fine-tuning their compositions! You can get MIDI synthesisers, drum machines, guitars, horns and other instruments.

A MIDI interface allows your PCW to play your compositions through several instruments at once, making it an electronic conductor. You don't lift a finger – all your music has been keyed in line by line. If you have a multi-timbral synth, it can play several different instrument settings at once (one line in its drum setting, another in 'bass', another in 'flute' and so on); otherwise it will play all the different lines as the same sound (all flute, or whatever the synth is set to).

To make MIDI music you need a PCW, at least one MIDI instrument, a MIDI interface, and MIDI software. Cables to link the lot up are available from the shop where you buy your synthesiser. The best MIDI interface is that produced by EMR at £59.95. EMR are on 0702 335747. If you have a 9512, check with them when buying that it will work.

EMR also do a MIDI interface, for £89.90. It offers MIDI in and out plus MIDI through connection, enabling you to hook up to a separate unit which can control several instruments from the one socket. The EMR interface has two MIDI outs, and also has a connection for a 'clock' (metronome) device.

You can't edit the waveform (i.e. create the timbre of the note, oscilloscope fashion) with EMR's software. DHCP however offer special software that will do this for the Casio CZ101, CZ230, and the Korg DW6000 synths (each package is £45). DHCP's number is 0440 61207.

BASIC errors

I find it infuriating that, when using BASIC, any disc error (through there not being a disc in the drive, for example) dumps me out of the program back into CP/M's A> prompt. Is there anything I can do about it?

Dave Shaw, Luton, Beds

8000 PLUS: *Yes. Include the lines ON ERROR GOTO 1000 POKE 64487,254 in your listing. That will keep you in BASIC when disc errors occur, jumping to the line number 1000 (you can have any other line number instead of 1000, of course).*

Getting the boot

Is there any way I can get extra files automatically copied on to the M drive when I start up LocoScript?

C J Parker, St Agnes, Cornwall

8000 PLUS: *LocoScript automatically copies things like fonts and user dictionaries, but if you want text files copied across all you can do is call them TEMPLATE.STD. Files of this name are copied across to the corresponding group in the M drive. The storage of important files for quick reference in a TEMPLATE.STD is a well known LocoScripter's trick.*

Interface to face

If you find that something connected to the PCW's edge connector at the back doesn't work, it's probably very simple: the edge connector may be a little oxidised. Simply switch off the PCW and rub the edge connector gently with Duraglit metal polish, or even a hard office eraser.

N Kyriacou, London

A to Z of Protext

I have several shortish documents in Protext and want to make them into one large one, putting the documents together in alphabetical order of the document names. The documents are all notes on composers, so that in the final large document, I want the text in BACH first, then BEETHOVE.N, then BRAHMS, and so on. Is there a quick way to do it?

Charles Searson, Lewisham, Surrey

8000 PLUS: *Yes. Let's say you have 26 text files called A to Z that you want to combine in that order into a large one. What you do is first make up a file of commands that says 'merge the text from A, then merge the text from B, and so on, up to Z'. Then you can tell Protext to run all the commands contained in this file and have a cup of tea while it does the merging for you.*

First put the disc with all the files to be merged in the drive. Type at the a> prompt SPON [RETURN] M:TEMP [RETURN] CAT [RETURN] SPOFF [RETURN]

Now load M:TEMP. You see a file containing the directory plus the commands you typed. Edit out the commands at the top and bottom. Go into box mode with [ALT] B and move the second, third and fourth columns of the directory listing to the bottom of the first, so you end up with a long list of the files, in alphabetical order.

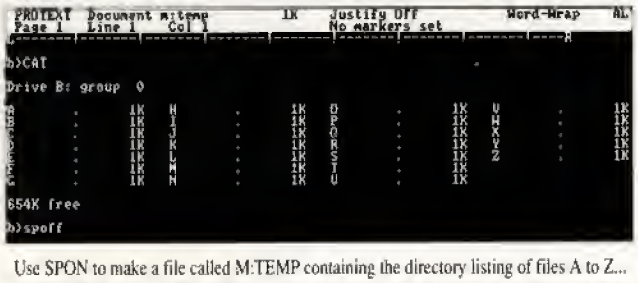
Next use [EXCH] to replace all occurences of [SPACE]??K by nothing and give the options as 'agc'. You should now have a document M:TEMP consisting of the file names A to Z. (Edit out any ones you don't want).

Next use [EXCH] to replace !. by !./253//29//29//13//13//254/MER [SPACE] and again give 'agc' as the options. (The character / is on the 9512 keyboard and is [EXTRA] full stop on the 8512 or 8256). Finally edit the file so that every line looks similar, i.e.

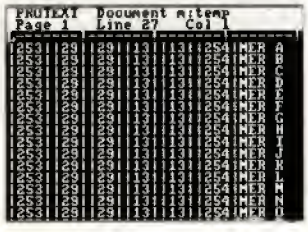
/253//29//29//13//13//254/MER A
/253//29//29//13//13//254/MER B
...and so on to
/253//29//29//13//13//254/MER Z

Save the file and clear the text by typing CLEAR [RETURN]. Now all you do is type X [RETURN] and M:TEMP [RETURN] and watch the magic.

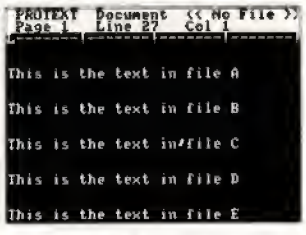
Protext buffs may be interested to know that the second /29/ (the code to go to the end of a document) is not superfluous; without it Protext sometimes doesn't make it all the way and inserts text before the end.



Use SPON to make a file called M:TEMP containing the directory listing of files A to Z...



then tidy it up and add the codes shown. On saving this file, clearing it, and executing it...



..you end up with a file made up for you containing the text of files A to Z in order.

Corruption at work

While loading up LocoScript 2 recently I have been getting this error message: ERROR WITH FILE: LOCOSPEL.JOY DISC HAS BEEN CHANGED and on cancelling the operation, as advised, I get ERROR IN DRIVE A: DISC HAS BEEN CHANGED WHILE A DOCUMENT IS IN USE I don't know how to fix it!

Gareth Thomas, Edmonton, London

8000 PLUS: *It sounds very much as though your disc is corrupted. Probably it has been near a ringing telephone, loudspeaker or other magnetic source, though corruption can happen for no apparent reason whatsoever. The answer is simply to re-copy your LocoScript master disc as illustrated in the manual. If you've been careless enough to have been working with the original, you'll have to return it to Locomotive Software (0306 740606) and ask them nicely to replace it with a new one.*

Maxi Micro Design

All computer graphics are improved by reduction. The smaller you can make the stair-steps the less noticeable they become. In this tip we assume you have access to a photocopier able to reduce an A4 page to A5 and A6, and that you are able to work in Micro Design's 256K page format.

Ideally any job should be DTPd as large as possible. The greater the photocopied reduction the more you will enhance your work. Before you start you will know the finished size of your job. What you need to know is the largest working size in pixels which, after printout, can be reduced on a photocopier to the desired finished size.

Here is a simple way of scaling any job to give you these pixel coordinates in the Micro Design full page layout. With this method you can instantly find the MD layout size which will permit the maximum photocopied reduction for any job.

Creative Technology have thoughtfully provided a scale, stored on the Areas disc as SCALE.MDA. Load this scale into the 256K page. Now doctor it. Extend the X scale across the full width of the page and likewise the Y down the full length of the page. As supplied, the scale is marked off in half units and single units and calibrated at 2 unit intervals. Recalibrate your scale using a larger font, say SANSERIF 9, at 5 unit intervals. Label your scaled page '256K A4 upright' adding the reminder '1 unit = 8 pixels'. Print this out at full scale.

Photocopy this printout reduced to A5 and also A6.

Let's say you want to create a business card. The finished size could be a 3.5"x2.25" (90mmx55mm). Measuring off on your A6 scale gives 106 units wide by 60 units deep.

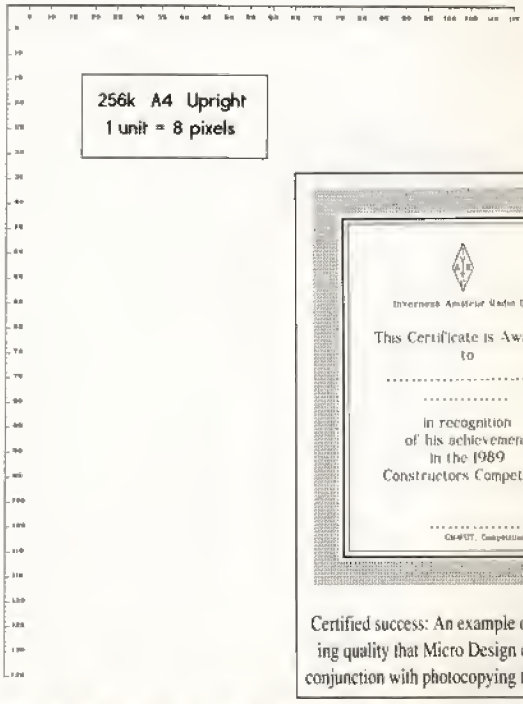
In the 256K A4 upright page, one cursor keypress moves the cursor 8 pixels. This is also a hop of one unit on your scale. Keying B you can create a Box 840 pixels wide (105 scale units x 8) and 480 pixels deep (60 scale units x 8). Centre your box [PAGE] and [ENTER].

When you have DTPd your card, print it out at full scale. Make a photocopy reduced to A6 and there you have your business card at its finished state.

When designing an A4 letterhead, do it in the A4 sideways format. Photocopy at the A4 to A5 reduction, which will give you A3 to A4. A4 sideways is at the same scale as A4 upright so you can use your scales here too. Or extend the X axis and shorten the Y; photocopy and file along with your upright scales.

When printed out, A4 sideways stretches the image along the X axis. This makes the stair-steps shallower and helps to round off curves. This stretching tends to fatten typefaces which makes them appear to be in bold. Compensate by printing out at the lightest setting on your printer. Photocopying tends to thin images. So reducing on a photocopier will not only round off curves but open up lower case a, e and g to make small fonts more readable.

Ronald Macdonell, Dingwall



Model scale: This scale can be printed out then reduced on a photocopier from A4 to A5 then A6, giving you a quick way of sizing artwork that will be reduced

Certified success: An example of the astonishing quality that Micro Design can achieve in conjunction with photocopying to a smaller size

Two things at once?

Is it possible to print out one document while editing another?

W Sandilands, Bristol

8000 PLUS: *Yes. Don't waste time watching a LocoScript document print out when you could be editing another one! On the PCW you can print a file at the same time as editing another ('background printing'). But you can go further than this; if you're editing a long file, you might want to print another file without having to save your current edit and restart all over again.*

While editing your file, press the [f7] key (in Loco 2, [f1]) and select the 'Disc management' menu option. The editing screen will vanish and you will see the same file directory screen as when you aren't editing a file. Now you can print, move and delete other files in the normal way, though they have to be on the same disc – you can't change discs in the middle of editing a document like this. To get back to your edit, just press [EXIT].

This might come in handy if you realise while editing that your disc is full and you want to make some space to save your edit. Go to the disc manager and move enough files from the floppy disc to the M drive to make space. When you've saved the edit you can move the files you moved to M onto some new discs. If you don't, of course, they'll be lost forever!

It follows from the above that if you want to print out a file on disc X while you simultaneously edit a file on disc Y, you can't do it.

So, copy the file from disc X to the M drive using [f3] in the disc manager. Then insert disc Y pressing [f1] to notify LocoScript of the change ([f7] in Loco 2) and cursor over the file in the M drive to be printed and hit P for print.

Now you can edit the file on disc Y while the printer churns out its stuff in the background.

Protext quickies

- If you can't remember whether or not you've saved a file since making changes, you don't have to save it again just in case. Just type L [RETURN] and you will be warned if the file has been changed since it was last saved. [STOP] to carry on.
- A quick way to move and copy single lines of text is to delete the whole line with [ALT] [CAN]. From then on [ALT]U will insert that line at the position of the cursor. [ALT]U will replace small blocks that have been deleted too.
- If you're using [FIND], merely pressing [+] will immediately jump to the next occurrence of the text you're looking for. Similarly [-] will move to the previous occurrence. If you put symbols like $ in front of sections, then [FIND]$ plus [+] and [-] is a quick way of moving from section head to section head.
- Try pressing [ALT] [SHIFT] 2 (the 2 being the one on the numeric keypad down on the right). Users of SID might like to change the text to something else!

Jonathan Brazier, Sheffield

The PIPs are going

While using PIP to copy some files from the M drive to my A drive I get the following message:

A>PIP A:=M:*.CAL
COPYING – MORT.CAL
ERROR: DISK WRITE NO DATA BLOCK – A:MORT.$$$ A>
What is going on?

Phil Noskeau, Toton, Notts

8000 PLUS: *PIP's error mesages are akin to Linear B sometimes. This is its friendly little way of saying 'there isn't enough room on the disc in the A drive to copy the file MORT.CAL'. That .$$$ suffix is the temporary one given to files while they're being copied. The solution is simply to erase files from the A disc so as to leave enough space.*

LocoScripters beware though: if you've been using this disc in LocoScript, you'll find that LocoScript files in groups 1 to 7 aren't shown in CP/M when you do a DIR. So what you do is to go into group 1 by typing USER 1 [RETURN] and then DIR [RETURN] to see what files are in group 1. (Note how the prompt changes to 1a> for group 1). You can now erase ones from that group if you wish. Repeat for USER 2, USER 3 and so on up to 7. Return to the normal A> prompt by typing USER 0 [RETURN].

You haven't finished yet! LocoScript's limbo files are stored in groups 8 to 15, which don't show in Loco, but which are normal groups in CP/M. So you have to continue the above for USER 8 through to USER 15 to erase any limbo files that happen to be lurking there.

Writing a column

I'm sure you must have been asked this before, but is there any way I can get two-column printing in LocoScript? I would like this for a newsletter I'm preparing on my 9512.

Ms F Bertram, Liverpool

8000 PLUS: *This tip will look very familiar to regular 8000 Plus readers, but for the benefit of recent arrivals, we're happy to print it again! LocoScript doesn't have a command to do two columns directly, but there are various ways of doing it. The first is fiddly at the printout stage, but lets you edit the document easily. What you do is use a single layout for the whole document half a page wide (eg. with a left margin at 10 and a right margin at 47) then print two pages to one sheet, offsetting the second page of each to the right, to give the appearance of two columns.*

*In **LocoScript 1** create a TEMPLATE.STD and press [f2] choosing **'New layout'**. Cursor down to the ruler line and set the margins at 10 and 47 using the cursors and [f1] and [f2]. Set any tabs if required. [EXIT] back to the main document. Save the template; any documents you create now will come out as one thin column. For printing them out two columns to a page, see below.*

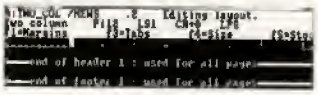
LocoScript 2: *Create a TEMPLATE.STD and press [f2] for **'Change layout'**. Put in any tabs with the [+] key and set the margins at 10 and 47 using [f1]. [EXIT] [ENTER] and then [EXIT] the main document. Any document you create in this group will now have the margins to make it a long thin document; you get two columns to a page while printing out – see below.*

When printing out, you feed each sheet of paper in twice and, for each even numbered page, you fool the printer into printing the column over to the right with the 'left offset'.

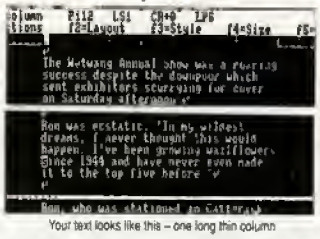
*You have to print each page individually. Just before printing out a page, press [PTR]. Then in Loco 1 press [f5] **'Document/Reprint'** (in Loco 2, [f7] **'Document'**) and print the particular page you want, 5 say, by selecting **'from page 5'** and also **'to page 5'**.*

Then in Loco 1 press [f3] (in Loco 2, [f6]) and set the 'left offset' as required. An offset of 0 prints the left half of the page, and an offset of 40 prints the column on the right half, so you use the former for odd numbered pages and the latter for even. You can tell if the printer head is at the right position because it moves over to the offset you've just specified.

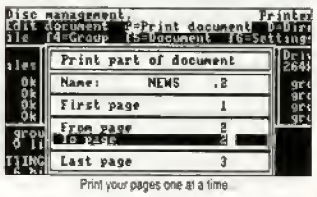
This works on all PCWs.



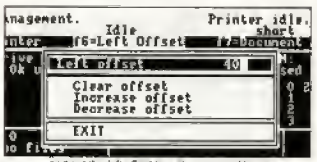
The layout for a two column document, with margins at 10 and 47



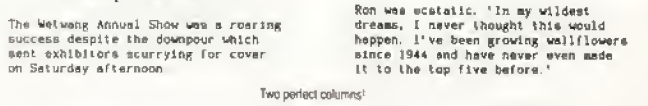
Your text looks like this – one long thin column



Print your pages one at a time...



...and set the left offset to suit even or odd pages



Two perfect columns!

On the agenda

Owners of the 'AgendA' electronic personal organiser may want to transfer files to their PCW. Here is how it's done (this method works better than the one suggested in February's 8000 Plus, issue 41, page 34). Remember you must have a special file in the Z drawer of the Agenda as follows: ***#26*** which will make sure the PCW knows when the file transfers end.

Run up CP/M. With the disc still in the drive type SETSIO 1200, HANDSHAKING ON, XON ON [RETURN]. Type PIP [RETURN]. At the * prompt type FILE1=AUX: [RETURN] (or any other name apart from FILE1)

Attach the Agenda to the PCW via cable (it must be switched off). Turn it on and follow the instructions for printing a file or group of files in the Agenda manual.

The * will reappear on the PCW. If you want to transfer another file you now can by typing for example FILE2=AUX: [RETURN].

Transfer from the PCW to the Agenda is as shown in 8000 Plus.

Peter Glass, London

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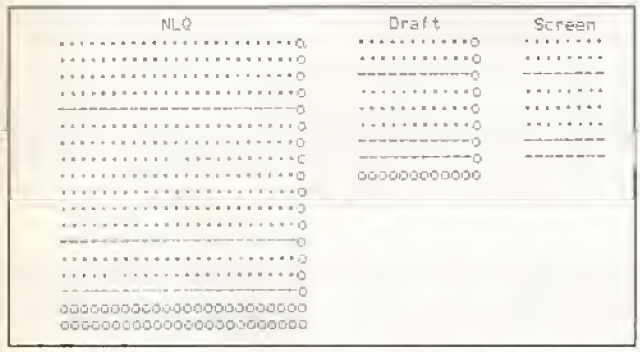
Grid expectations

When using Locochar to design your own characters in LocoScript 2, it is handy to have printed grids to sketch out your designs on. The easy way is to let LocoScript print them out for you. Make up a document called say GRIDS as shown. The dots are decimal points ([EXTRA] full stop) and the lines are hyphens.

You can get three sets of NLQ, Draft and Screen patterns on a sheet of A4 by copying. To copy text, put the cursor at the beginning of the section to be copied, press [COPY], put the cursor at the end, press [COPY] again, give a number such as 0, move to the position to insert the copied text, press [PASTE] and then the number. Printout works best in draft quality.

Ian Chisnall, Bolton

This LocoScript document produces a grid which when printed out...



...lets you sketch out Locochar characters to see how they will look before making them up with the Locochar program

Flashy tip

One command missing from the PCW's Mallard BASIC is FLASH, which makes any text you like flash on and off repeatedly on screen – very nice for drawing attention to important messages. However, you can simulate it as follows. Have two lines such as this at the beginning of the listing:

```
5 e$=CHR$(27)
10 DEF FNflash$(r%, c%, phrase$)
= e$ + "Y" + CHR$(r% + 32) +
CHR$(c% + 32) + e$ + "j" + e$ +
"p" + phrase$ + e$ + "k" + e$ + "q"
+ phrase$
```

This sets up a function FNflash which, in conjunction with a FOR... NEXT loop, allows you to place any message anywhere on the screen and flash it as many times as you like. For example:

```
200 FOR j%=1 TO 15 : PRINT
FNflash$(5,10,"Cleans baths with-
out scratching") : NEXT
```

will flash the message "Cleans baths without scratching" 15 times positioned at row 5, column 10 of the screen. You can try other figures apart from 15, 5 or 10, of course. (There are 32 rows and 90 columns on the screen, with the top left hand corner being row 0, column 0, and the bottom right row 31, column 89).

Another use is as follows:

```
50 WHILE INKEY$="" : PRINT
FNflash$(30,40,"Any key to con-
tinue") : WEND
```

which flashes the message repeatedly until a key is pressed.

If you have an error message saying "string too long", you'll have to make your message up in parts, positioning the various parts so they appear to align on screen, e.g.:

```
200 FOR j%=1 TO 15 : PRINT
FNflash$(5,10,"This is an
extremely") : PRINT
FNflash$(5,30," long message that
has been broken up in parts": NEXT
```

Nick Morice-Jones, Chatham, Kent

Master copy

Database program Masterfile lacks a 'copy record' facility, which means a lot of tedious retyping if you want to enter a large number of nearly identical records. (As a teacher I have to do this for timetabling classes where 20 records of class, room, course no. and so on are the same with only the time different). But you can effectively copy a record as follows.

Select 'no records' by selecting every one then inverting: S, E then I

Enter the record to be copied once (I for 'insert new record'). Go to the load/save menu (X then L) and save the partial file with P. Give a different name, of course, or else you'll scrap the rest of the file!

Reload the main file as usual with L. Merge/load the partial file just saved with M followed by the name of the partial file. Repeat step 5 for as many copies of the record are required. Edit the copied records as required

Chris Derricott, Stafford

Turns me off

Don't switch your PCW on and off repeatedly – it doesn't do it much harm, but it certainly does it no good. If you want to reset it – to change from LocoScript to CP/M or vice-versa – do it by pressing [SHIFT] [EXTRA] [EXIT] together instead of the off switch. But always remove discs from the drive before doing this – they could get corrupted.

In fact it is good practice to switch it on in the morning and leave it on until you switch it off in the evening. A PCW only uses as much power as a light bulb.

R Batty, Reading

Stitch that

Tipoffs in February showed how LocoScript can be used to generate cross-stitch designs. Using a desktop publishing package such as Stop Press is even better, giving you facilities such as copying, moving and inverting your designs. You can also try overlaying your grid with clip-art to be used as a template for a cross-stitch design.

In Stop Press, first create a grid using the pattern designer I8. The grid should be 7 pixels across and 3 down to give a square on the screen and printout. Save the grid in the pattern file display area.

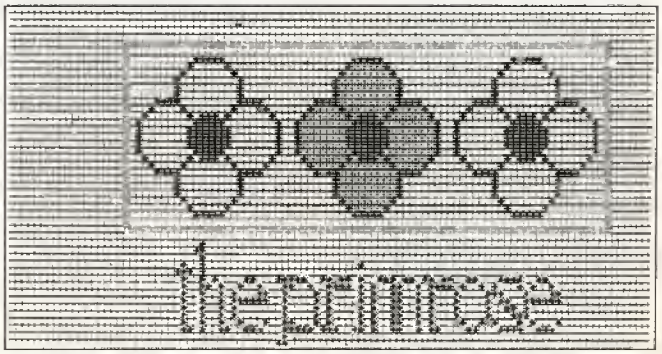
Then return to the control panel. Click I2 to select as paint colous the pattern you have just created. Click the paint can I1 and fill the entire page with the square grid. This can be saved on disc as the blank grid.

Return to the control panel, select 'gridlock on' (L1) and then gridlock adjust (L2). Set the gridlock with the axis (000,000) in the centre of one of the squares of the grid, then set the lock to 008,004. This ensures that subsequent movement of the crosswires will be from the centre of one square to the centre of the next, thus facilitating the accurate location of pattern markings.

Return to the control panel, and using G2, set the paint spray size to no. 2 (shows as a +). Select a black or shaded pattern from the pattern file display area (or G3 or H3) and use the spray icon G1 to design your cross stitch pattern on the grid.

Different spray patterns, spray densities and spray sizes can be used to distinguish between different colours in the final cross stitch design. All the copy, invert and move facilities can be used, making the design of larger, repetitious patterns an absolute doddle. Mistakes are corrected by using white paint. Clip art designs and text can be overlaid on the grid (with ghosting on) and used as a template for the cross stitch pattern.

Ian Goulding, Roushdy, Alexandria, Egypt



Say it with flowers: Stop Press can be very effectively used to design cross stitch patterns

DATA statement

Typing in long strings of data numbers in DATA lines in BASIC is tedious, but there are ways of easing the pain.

First type AUTO followed by the first line number of the data statements (e.g. AUTO 250 [RETURN]). New line numbers will be produced automatically for you.

Next press the [SHIFT LOCK] key and enable the numeric keypad by pressing [ALT] [RELAY].

Now use your left hand for the letters A to F and the right for the numbers by using the keypad (down on the bottom right). Instead of using your nose to hit the comma key, press the decimal point on the keypad next to the zero.

At the end of each line press [ALT] [RELAY] again to disable the keypad, cursor back to the first decimal point, and select 'overwrite' by pressing the [+] key. Then replace each point by a comma with the sequence: comma, cursor right, cursor right.

If you can get a friend to read out the lines as you type, this is a great help. Unfortunately after trying this I don't have any friends left.

David Simpson, Lusaka, Zambia

Zeroing in

With regard to the problem of Mini Office distinguishing between empty and zero cells (Tipoffs, February 1990, page 70) you can do this as follows.

Define zero as a very small number, say 1/9999, which you can enter as a formula and then use [ALT] T to tag as ZERO. Whenever a zero is encountered you enter [ALT] T ZERO. Then when you total the number of cells that are greater than zero, this will exclude the empty cells, but the error introduced by the small defined 'zero' shouldn't affect the total.

If, for example, you have ten cells of which two are empty, five are 'zero' (defined as above) and the other three are 3, 5 and 8, then the total will be about 16.0002, giving an average (when divided by the number of non-zero cells) of about 2.000025 – which will show as 2 and will be 2 for practical purposes.

If there is a danger that these 'zeroes' might add up and cause problems, total the cells containing 'zero' with IF (A1=ZERO,1,0) etc and subtract the product of this total and ZERO before from the overall total before calculating the average.

Michael J Maloney, London

NEW man

One annoying thing you can easily do in BASIC is to type NEW, which clears out the current program listing, having forgotten to save it or run it. However, if you can remember the first line of the listing and it was a PRINT or REM statement, you can recover the listing after a premature NEW as follows.

Add 7 to the number of characters in the REM or PRINT statement, including punctuation and all spaces except that immediately following the REM. Then type POKE 31382,x where x is the number you just got.

If for example the first line is 10 REM Hello then after a NEW you could recover the listing with the command POKE 31382,12

You can now LIST or RUN the program. You can't SAVE it, but you can LLIST it to the printer and at least get a hard copy.

With BASIC 1.45 (the version number is shown when BASIC starts up) substitute 31914 instead of 31382 in the above.

N Hancock, Lymm, Cheshire

Gets my back up

A boring tip, but an essential one! Always, without fail, keep backups – ie. copies – of your data discs. Every night when you finish work, copy all the files which have been changed from your work disc to a copy disc.

If you're not sure which files have been changed, you can just use LocoScript 2's **'copy disc'** facility ([f2] from the disc manager) to do make a complete copy of the work disc.

Alternatively you can use DISCKIT (for any discs, CP/M or LocoScript 1 or 2). To do this, remove any discs and reset the PCW with [SHIFT] [EXTRA] [EXIT]. Insert the CP/M disc and type at the A> prompt DISCKIT [RETURN]. Then follow the prompts to 'copy a disc'. Be careful with disc changes; if you get them mixed up you could damage both.

A disc costs you a couple of pounds; recovering data from a corrupted disc is possible but expensive. So always keep backups.

J Ferris, Bristol

LocoFile file problems

I use LocoFile to catalogue my LP and cassette collection. I can produce printed details of all the recordings in my collection in the obvious way – i.e. by doing a mail merge with the LocoFile data file, printing the result of each merge with the printer set up for short length continuous paper with no gaps or headers.

This produces a good listing, with anything from all the information to a selection of say, artist and title only – but I don't get a file of everything, only a printout. I've tried saving the result of each merge as a file and then inserting each one on top the last, but as I've got hundreds of recordings, this is impossibly cumbersome.

Is there any way of easily getting a single LocoScript file containing all the information?

R J Wheeler, Berkeley, Gloucester

8000 PLUS: *Not that I can think of. I must admit I can't think of a good reason to have a LocoScript file containing the information either! But perhaps someone out there knows different?...*

Time marches on its stomach

Is it possible to get times added up for you automatically in Protext?

Roger Mills, Bath

8000 PLUS: *Yes, with a bit of 'programming'. Here's a document that will add up three lots of hours, minutes and seconds for you. You can extend this to any number of things to be added of course by copying the second section ad infinitum. If you just want it to add up minutes and seconds and not hours, remove all references below to HT, H, "hrs", &H&h, and the bit that goes from >IF MT>=60 to >EI inclusive.*

To use the document, print it to screen with PS (or to the printer). You are asked for the times and the total is printed for you.

```
>SV HT=0 MT=0 ST=0

Time for the first section is
>AV "hrs " H "mins " M "secs " S
>SV HT=HT+H MT=MT+M
ST=ST+S
&H&h &M&m &S&s

And the second section is
>AV "hrs " H "mins " M "secs " S
>SV HT=HT+H MT=MT+M
ST=ST+S
&H&h &M&m &S&s

And the third section is
>AV "hrs " H "mins " M "secs " S
>SV HT=HT+H MT=MT+M
ST=ST+S
&H&h &M&m &S&s

>IF ST>=60
>RP
>SV ST=ST-60 MT=MT+1
>UN ST<60
>EI

>IF MT>=60
>RP
>SV MT=MT-60 HT=HT+1
>UN MT<60
>EI

>SV HT=HT[W1] MT=MT[W1]
ST=ST[W1]
Total time is &HT&h &MT&m
&ST&s
```

Index catalogue

I am preparing an index for a book in LocoScript. Is there a way of sorting a document consisting of single lines into alphabetical order?

Doreen Waters, Edinburgh

8000 PLUS: *No, not really (though with a lot of jiggery-pokery you can do it in LocoSpell).*

I think the best thing to do is buy the 8000 Plus Tipoffs collection and disc (see the Special Offers pages in this magazine). It has a special BASIC program that will sort lines on page 134. You'll need to make an ASCII file of your index ([f1] from the disc manager in Loco 2, [f7] in Loco 1) taking the 'simple text' option, putting it in group 0 of your disc. Run the BASIC program on this file and to view the result, make a new LocoScript document and then use 'insert text' ([f1] Loco 2, [f7] Loco 1 while editing the document) to insert the sorted file into it.

Your best bet may be a very good specialist indexing program for LocoScripters called Ansible Index. It also has a word counter. It costs £35 from 0672 62576.

Take a closer look at your computer system. Space age technology it may be, but space efficient it quite clearly is not.

What with screens and printers, disk drives and keyboards, not to mention the mountains of papers and jungle of wires, office systems don't rest on a desk, they dominate it, totally.

Until now any solution to this desktop congestion has been prohibitively expensive. But now economic sense as well as design flair has entered the scene in the form of City Desk which means affordable space for the most important part of the system – the operator.

A single pedestal desk, it houses the disk drive and continuous paper system beneath the desk surface and the monitor and printer above it; as for the connecting cables, they are controlled neatly and discreetly.

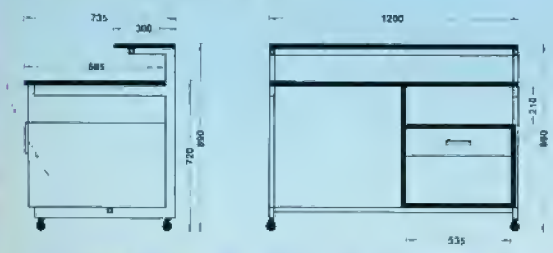
At £139.50* it pays to put technology in its place

Compatible with the majority of PC systems currently available, its many assets include a steel cantilever frame, full cable management, heavy duty lockable castors, heat/stain/scratch resistant working surfaces available in either cream or grey and a full width drawer unit, which can be assembled for left or right hand use. With dimensions of H35" x W47" x D29", it can negotiate a standard 30" doorway with ease.

But perhaps its most pleasing feature is its price. At £139.50 – with free delivery in mainland UK and a 12 month guarantee – now it really does pay to put technology in its place.

To order, simply complete and send the coupon or telephone for further details.

* Plus VAT



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EUROPE LIMITED

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Tel: 0734 594145. Fax: 0734 589954.

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I wish to order ☐ workstation(s) in Cream ☐ /Grey ☐

at £160.43 each (inc VAT). I enclose my cheque for £_____

or charge my Access ☐ /Visa ☐ No: Expiry date _____

Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____ Tel No: _____

APCW 590

These pages provide a guide to software for the Amstrad PCW. Published in three monthly parts, this time it's the turn of Databases, Educational Software, Communications and Programming Languages. We've set out to cover every important piece of software we could lay our hands on, and to give you enough information to decide whether they are suitable for you.

All software will run on both the 9512 and the 8000 series machines, though the former's daisywheel printer cannot print graphical output.

The selection isn't comprehensive, but the software listed here represents what we think is the best of that currently available.

As well as a brief summary of what they do, the main Plus and Minus points for each program are listed – Pluses have a ▲ by them, Minuses a ▼. Those we think are particularly noteworthy have a corner flash.

Have fun window shopping!

Databases

There are broadly two different types of database, and which suits you best depends, of course, on what you want it for.

Firstly there's the simple card index substitute. For many home users, this will be the kind of thing you want – all it does is store your address book or stock items so that you can easily look them up.

A more sophisticated option is the programmable database. With these, in addition to allowing simple card index retrieval there is a command language which allows you to analyse the data on the cards. For example, you could automatically add up the money owed to you by all your customers from Yorkshire. To make best use of this kind of facility, you will need to be able to understand a little programming, although it's not too hard really.

A bit of jargon now. A database is said to consist of records – this is just like a card in a conventional card file, with all someone's details on it. Each record is composed of fields – a field is a single entry on a card, like someone's name, or age, or postcode.

The thing that makes a database special is an index. You might be able to hold your address book as a simple list in a word processor document, but if it gets large then this becomes unwieldy. An index means that the database has worked out which order records should be in, so it can go straight to the one you want without looking at lots of others first.

The field that you use as your index (e.g. someone's surname) is said to be a key field, and can be looked up very fast compared to "non-key" fields. A good database will allow multiple keys, meaning that it can look up data just as fast for a variety of types of information.

Masterfile 8000

£49.95 • Campbell Systems • 0378 77762/3

A specially written PCW version of the successful database sold on other Amstrad computers. It is fully menu controlled, and makes good use of the PCWs special screen and keys. It can deal with up to 8 separate data files at once, so can cope with relational databases. Screen (but not printed output) can be elaborately laid out with boxes, lines etc.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Works fast
- ▲ Wide range of Layout options
- ▲ Handles 'relational' files
- ▲ Plenty of good example files
- ▲ Can do arithmetic calculations within its records
- ▼ Capacity limited by size of M drive – best on an 8512
- ▼ Takes a while to learn all the features

At Last Plus

£39.95 • Rational Solutions • 0566 81511

At Last Plus is a full-featured database that is excellent value for money. It does what Cardbox did, with much better reporting facilities, and can sort too. You can do simple totalling of columns, but not general arithmetic on fields in a record. A good general purpose database.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Good screen editing facilities
- ▲ Constants enable insertion of repetitive data
- ▲ Good on storage space - ideal for 8256 owners
- ▲ Handles names and addresses well
- ▼ No arithmetic calculation in fiels
- ▼ Setting up the database is at first confusing
- ▼ Good, but not that good

Cambase II

£49.95 • Cambrian Software • 0766 831878

New version of the old favourite PCW database. Most important change is the Copy Filespec facility. You can set up a new database with potentially more entries than you've made provision for using the information from the original database. You can also change the fields to suit another set-up.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Quick and efficient to use
- ▲ You can set up a database blueprint (Filespec) which you can test thoroughly before entering data
- ▲ Includes powerful features like conditionals, loops, field validation, and specified layouts
- ▲ Simple parts of the program are well covered in the manual
- ▼ Can't use the memory bad news for 8256 users
- ▼ You have to guess how to use the more advanced features
- ▼ Not much room for prompts
- ▼ Tendency to crash occasionally in Filespec

LocoFile

£29.95 • Locomotive • 0306 740606

The indexed pop-up database that runs from within LocoScript 2 and that goes even further toward turning LocoScript 2 into a completely integrated software package. Unlike most databases empty records take up almost no space on disc. This allows large record cards to be defined even if they won't always be used. Records pop up very quickly without having to exit from your document. Works best when used in conjunction with LocoMail.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Very easy to use
- ▲ Unusually efficient use of disc space
- ▲ Can alter existing index - a very powerful feature indeed
- ▲ Automatically upgrades your LocoScript, LocoMail and LocoSpell to version 2.2
- ▲ Sample databases help you get a better feel for the program
- ▲ Very flexible when designed the record format
- ▲ Carries out searches on partial strings - ideal for when dealing with incomplete information

Chibase 3.0

£29.95 • Chiasma • 06333 60996

The updated version of the 'free format' database. You type in the text, mark the words to be indexed and treat the file as a database. The updated version allows you to import and export ASCII data files and a chain delete option enables you to work your way methodically through the database deleting the records you don't want while keeping those that you do.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Good amend, sort and recall features
- ▲ You can edit without a word processor
- ▲ Searches quickly through data
- ▲ Great for storing large amounts of data where the subject matter is variable
- ▲ Useful record template
- ▼ Can't run from M drive

Datastore II

£39.95 • Digita International • 0395 270273

Ideal for the novice, Datastore II allows you to remove the tedium from filing, updating and organising information. 32000 records, 32 fields, fast search' facility. Function keys can have phrases assigned to them. Good for uses where the emphasis is on printed output.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Flexible range of print commands
- ▲ Simple to use
- ▲ Calculation facilities
- ▼ Need to preset maximum no. of records before you start
- ▼ Slow at browsing through

Delta

£99.99 • Compsoft • 04868 25925

Delta is another of the heavyweights, like dBase II and Condor, but unlike them is fully menu driven. Although the screen layouts are fully flexible, there is a default "quick" layout so you don't have to sweat at defining your own. It could use better record indexing facilities. Particularly good for writing applications, once you have ploughed through the large manual.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Records can contain up to 90 fields, plus groups of fields that may be repeated
- ▲ Screen layout can be user defined, or "quick" mode used
- ▲ Single page letter writer provides detailed mail merge
- ▲ Processes can be defined, and run from user defined menus, for ease of use by others
- ▲ Very full, and quite readable, manual
- ▼ Only one field may be used for indexing
- ▼ Very big program – a PCW8256 would be hard pushed
- ▼ Some of the menu operations are unforgiving to errors

Mini Office Professional Plus

£39.95 • Database Software • 0625 878888

The Mini Office database retains its original format. It's a

pretty standard card index type, similar to First Base. Good range of selection operations and arithmetic on fields. Can sort over a combination of fields and print out a variety of smart layouts, and you can have up to 255 fields. No import or export of data.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Easy to use and intuitive
- ▲ Can use the data in the word processor
- ▲ Powerful selection and sort facilities
- ▲ Arithmetic on fields
- ▲ Test print facility lets you check your labels will print okay
- ▲ One command makes global changes
- ▼ Can't import or export data

Pocket InfoStar

£69.50 • MicroPro/DRA • 0386 841181

Consists of two large programs, DataStar and ReportStar (both available independently). DataStar is a conventionel database, with screen card layout and indexing. ReportStar then generates the printed output, either from DataStar or CalcStar files. Powerful if you can use them, but the suite is horrifically overcomplicated, and the documentation just incomprehensible.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ DataStar is a quite good database with indexing end calculated fields.
- ▲ "Transaction processing" feature allows cross referencing of data files.
- ▲ Can be integrated with other Pocket products, eg WordStar.
- ▲ Can take up to 255 fields per record
- ▼ Two volume manual set is very badly organised.
- ▼ There are separate programs to run for form design, data entry and reporting.
- ▼ Operation is all by obscure command keys, à la WordStar.

dBase II

£99.00 • Ashton Tate/First Software • 07357 5244

The WordStar of database packages. Recently licensed "cheaply" for Amstrad machines, dBase II is a market leader in business computing. As you would expect, this means it is very powerful but very complex. It has a procedure language to allow you to write programs to manipulate the data, and you can construct index files for really fast access to large databases. If you can make the effort to learn it, it'll serve you well.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Powerful command language for customised programs
- ▲ Indexing facility makes large databases fast to handle
- ▲ Can handle very big databases
- ▲ The data can be fairly easily altered alter its entry
- ▼ Manual is daunting (but there are plenty of independent books on the market)
- ▼ Can't easily alter the screen record layout
- ▼ For an expensive package, you still only get 32 fields per record
- ▼ Generally unfriendly unless you have some programming skills

First Base

£29.95 • Minerva • 0392 437756

Billed as a simple database for the first time user, First Base is quite a competent cheap card index. The manual is computer printed, and weak on diagrams which doesn't help things. One weakness is getting printed results out of First Base – either you settle for crude lists, or you have to create a template in LocoScript which is awkward to do. But overall, it's pretty good value for money.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Can alter the index field at any time
- ▲ Simple to use screen editing make data entry easy
- ▲ Good value as a simple card index lookup system
- ▲ Can easily browse through the database picking out a set by hand
- ▼ Manual is badly laid out and generally difficult
- ▼ Producing printed output is awkward

Sagesoft Retrieve

£70 • Sagesoft • 091 2131555

A high-power package that is relatively easy to use with password security if desired, calculations, automatic counting or deletion of sets of records satisfying given conditions. It also has sophisticated sort and select commands, and can change the structure of an existing database. All this is done by a set of commands rather like a programming language. Printed formats are rather limited though and the program insists on using both drives, making use on an 8256 impractical.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Easy to use for a powerful package
- ▲ Advanced sorting and selection commands
- ▲ Subsets can be written to files
- ▲ Can count or delete subsets with one command
- ▲ Labelling/mailmerging routines included
- ▲ Can change structure of existing database
- ▼ Impossibly big program for 8256
- ▼ Printed output limited – must use mailmerge

Script2Base/Text2Base

£29.95 each Encyclasoft 0270 811890

Two free-form databases to be used with LocoScript and Protext respectively. Complete rewrites of FT=DB, the beauty of these databases is that you first create all your text on the word processor and import it as an ordinary (non-ASCII) text file into the database.You then mark all the words you want to see indexed as keywords so that you can go on to compile indexes and carry out searches.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Very easy to use
- ▲ Allows you to organise your collection of discs like an encyclopaedia
- ▲ Can construct new files made up of selected parts of existing ones
- ▲ Can send any part of a document to the printer on a line-by-line basis
- ▼ No text-editing facilities within the databases themselves
- ▼ Dreadful documentation

Smartcard

£59.95 • Focus Computers • 0272 420109

A conventional card index database which is now the neerest thing available to Cardbox . Small and fast, you can sort the records, index up to three fields and do simple arithmetic in fields. Can't put background text (eg. titles) on records or printouts.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Good clear screens
- ▲ Plenty of on screen help
- ▲ Fast and high capacity
- ▲ Easy to use
- ▼ Can't put background text on printed reports
- ▼ No way of exporting data for mailmerge

Magic Filer

£69.95 • Sagesoft • 091 2131555

Magic Filer is not a true database, but is a structured filing system. Information is split into a hierarchy of categories, and tagged with a keyword which is not stored as part of the data. You can browse through the data, but it will get tedious if you find it needs updating regularly. Many applications will find Magic Filer restrictive.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Good for browsing through data when you don't really know what's there
- ▲ Data can be declared "read only" to protect it from alteration by other browsers
- ▼ The basic filing system is weird but not wonderful
- ▼ Editing data once in Magic Filer is awkward
- ▼ The documentation is far too brief
- ▼ You can only have one database per disc

Microfile (Sold in The Micro Collection)

£49.95 • Saxon Computing • 0401 50697

Microfile is a well implemented simple database, driven by plenty of menus and on-screen prompts. It's fast and has good screen control, although it has some size restrictions. Microfile comes as part of a software suite,"The Micro Collection", which is good value (Microfile, Microwrite, MicroSpread, Flexilabel and Lock-It)

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ The price includes competent word processing, spread sheet, labelling and encryption programs
- ▲ Plenty of menus and on screen prompting
- ▲ Very flexible formatting for screen layout and printing
- ▲ Numeric fields can be expressions to be calculated
- ▲ Indexing is fast and can be on several fields
- ▼ Maximum number of fields per record is only 20
- ▼ Limited facilities for totalling up fields in a database

Educational

Educational Software is designed as an aid to traditional teaching, not an alternative. Its main use is in re-inforcing traditional learning done elsewhere and providing the stimulus of a different approach. It can also be especially useful in rote learning and improving the speed at which problems can be solved.

Business French (German/Italian/Spanish)

£49.95 each • Apex Computing Services • 0273 727477

Four language learning packages which enable the Euro-conscious professional to get to grips with commercial jargon in another tongue. Areas covered are business, technical, travel, restaurants, communications and social - all with seperate sub-sections to ensure that every eventuality is covered. A basic knowledge of the language concerned is, however, essential.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Fun and easy to use
- ▲ Comprehensive range of vocabulary
- ▼ Program needs cassettes to be really good
- ▼ Some poor screen displays

Iankey Crash Course

£24.95 • Iansyst • 071 607 0187

A fairly traditional typing tutor, taking you through basic keyboard exercises. There's a lot of explanatory text, which gets in the way second time around. Definitely competent, but a bit boring.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Mostly avoids boring letter drills
- ▲ Very full on-screen information guides you along
- ▲ "Fast" option cuts out some text if it gets repetitive
- ▼ Not particularly imaginative use of graphics
- ▼ It doesn't always ensure that the cursor is properly aligned with the exercise text

2 Fingers Touch Typing

£24.95 • Iansyst • 071 607 0187

Despite its provocative name, a useful typing tutor in that it specifically caters for people who can already get by on keyboards with two fingers. You are gradually introduced to touch typing, so your speed doesn't drop while you learn. Fills a necessary slot in the Typing Tutor market.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Suitable for improving two finger typists without much drop in speed
- ▲ Full on screen instructions
- ▲ Exercise material is interesting text, not letter drills
- ▼ Explanation text is annoyingly verbose in some lessons
- ▼ It doesn't always ensure that the cursor is properly aligned with the exercise text

Giantkiller

£14.95 • Topologika • 0733 244682

A mathematics adventure game loosely based on Jack and the Beanstalk. Lots of intriguing puzzles which should stimulate any student up to GCSE standard. Not the best adventure game ever written but great for meking mathematics fun!

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Puzzles plausibly integrated into scenario
- ▲ Progression of game is simple and well defined
- ▲ Puzzles introduce a lot of valid mathematics
- ▼ Program understands only very simple commands
- ▼ Saving a position takes a move – can be fatal
- ▼ Won't be of particular help in exams

Animal Vegetable Mineral World Wise

£14.95 each • Bourne Educational • 0794 523301

Aimed at the younger market, 7-15 year olds. Both these programs work by learning as the child uses them. Think of an object and the computer tries to guess it. If it is wrong, the child is asked for a question which would allow the PCW to be right next time, and it learns.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Can be used as many times as the child's imagination holds out
- ▲ Performance can be analysed by a teacher after a session
- ▲ As you build up a base of objects and questions, they can be saved for reuse
- ▼ It needs a lot of typing, hence a lot of supervision
- ▼ The PCW starts with only two objects known , so it takes time to get going
- ▼ Documentation has hardly been altered from cassette based versions
- ▼ Since it is for young children, more imaginative use of the screen would be nice

Better Spelling

£16.95 • School Software Ltd • 010 353 61 45399

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★ Festival Software Services ★

470 Leeds Road, Thackley, BRADFORD BD10 9AA (Tel 0274 613300)

This is a spelling course aimed at the 8 to adult age group. It consists of a series of well organised, short lessons each dealing with one topic, like plurals or which version of there /their/they're to use in a sentence. The use of the PCW screen is rather unimaginative, and doesn't hold your attention.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Well thought out lessons to emphasise particular points
▲ Teaches words in a sentence context as well as in isolation
▲ Lessons can be picked in any order from a menu
▲ Seems to be proof against mischievous key pressing
▼ Boring use of the screen doesn't grab interest
▼ No instructions come as to how to use the program.

Chemistry/Biology

£22.95 each • School Software • 010 353 61 45399

These two are fairly traditional question-and-answer test'. You are faced with a choice of 10 topics, and then asked 10 or so questions each, where you have to fill in the blank in a statement. There are preamble notes beforehand, and if you get it wrong you are given a clue. Aimed at 12-16 year olds.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Questions would challenge a GCSE pupil well
▲ Preamble notes introduce topics
▼ The fill in the blank questioning style has little flexibility for different answers
▼ No option to add questions for a specialised syllabus
▼ Some careless errors, like incorrect facts and hard to decipher chemical formulae

Micro Maths

£24.95 • LCL • 0491 579345

Supposedly covering 8 to adult ages, this seems an O-level type program, covering topics from calculus to tables. A good implementation on the PCW with proper use of the screen. Questions are picked at random from a pool, so may repeat but never run out. Replies to questions are typed in mathematical notation, like X^2+3

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ You can pause to use BASIC as a calculator while you think
▲ 'Unlimited' question set
▲ Comes with a 'free' book of AEB O level questions
▲ Good hints and explanations
▼ Questions in a topic repeat occasionally
▼ Some frills, like the clock and beeper, are annoying
▼ No flexibility to add questions for a particular syllabus

Amstat 1,2,3,4,6 and 7

£28 - £40 • SC Coleman Ltd • 0530 415919

A suite of six statistical routines including a business analysis program, forecasting and resource management. Individual prices range from £27.95 to £39.95. Very sophisticated, and perhaps because of that, a little awkward for beginners.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Good range of statistical functions
▲ Good manual
▲ Can produce good quality graphical results
▼ Some editing procedures very long winded
▼ Needs some expertise to use properly
▼ Weak on checking that input data is reasonable.

Yes Chancellor!

£14.95 • Topologika • 0733 244682

Wait! Don't skip over Yes Chancellor! because it calls itself an 'economic simulation' program. Instructive and fun to use, you type in your annual budgets (tax rates, public spending etc.) and see your popularity plunge and the economy crash. Great for economics classes, also an amusing game in itself.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Simple but effective model of the economy
▲ Comes with booklet explaining economic principles
▲ Great for teaching economic and political pragmatism!
▼ Can get boring as a game
▼ You can't adjust the model of the economy, so it can be too simple

Ultimate Quiz

£14.95 • David Greenhough Computing • 0274 640764

An educational aid for school age children. Two quizzes on a multiple choice format are available on the one disc - one on general knowledge and one on the Highway Code. You can play against a timer and can set the level of difficulty.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Optional noughts and crosses game included with either quizz
▲ Incorporates an editing file for easy updating of questions
▲ It's very versatile - up to 8 people can play
▲ None of the questions are repeated
▼ Some of the questions are a little esoteric

Supermaths

£16.95 • Abacus Software • 0689 36293

Specifically designed for the PCW, this program exercises basic numeracy skills in children. Questions are asked in quick fire volleys of ten and cover all four operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and so on). Scores are automatically recorded.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Special original Test and Worksheet modes included the latter is ideal for teachers
▲ Very efficient scoring method
▲ Numeracy level is very basic
▲ New version has enhanced screen displays
▼ Some of the questions may start to look familiar after a while

Language Tutors

£19.95 each • Kosmos Software • 05255 3942/5406

Four programs with identical formats to help you learn French, Italian, Spanish and German. They can be used just as effectively by students of those languages learning English too. Very versatile series of programs and useful adjuncts to conventional language learning.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Can edit the lessons yourself to include new words
▲ Useful self test option
▲ Completely bi lingual packages
▼ Purely for vocabulary learning no grammar lessons
▼ Would have been more useful if they had also included audio cassettes

Maths Mania

£16.95 • School Software Ltd • 010 353 61 45399

For children between the ages of 8 and 12, this program offers 5 levels of difficulty in multiplication and 2 in division. A very good program for exercising basic numeracy skills and for practising some mental arithmetic.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Program provides a chirpy feedback on the score of the user
▲ Large attractive numbers appear on the screen
▼ Surprisingly enough, no addition or subtraction exercises are provided
▼ Screens could be made more visually exciting for the younger users

Better Maths

£16.95 • School Software Ltd • 010 353 61 45399

A continuation of Maths Mania for the next age group 12 to 16 year olds. Topics are very varied and cover, among others, statistics, simple interest and algebra. Each topic consists of a series of ten multiple choice questions. At the end of each set, the percentage scored is shown.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Realistic level of difficulty practised
▲ Program makes a first class revision aid

Communications

Communications is one of the glittering areas of computing, gurus would have you believe. It can provide a fascinating hobby for 'hackers', but more importantly it is a valuable business tool.

'Electronic mail' is just what it says: you use your PCW to send messages, which can be documents thousands of words long, to others on the electronic mail system. The best known system of this kind is Telecom Gold, which also allows you to send telexes. Another major system is Prestel, which is more of an information provider – you can read share prices, weather information and other news direct from your phone line.

For any professional service, you pay a registration fee, plus a connection charge – typically around 10p per minute you use the system. Of course, your phone bills are extra. For hobbyists there are also 'Bulletin boards', which are effectively a kind of private electronic mail system run by a system operator (a 'sysop' to those in the know).

To use any service, you will need to buy a modem and an interface. A modem allows you to send computer signals down a phone line, and the interface gets the signals from your PCW to your modem. The pair will set you back £200 or more. Once done, you need some software to allow you to send and receive data, and it is this software reviewed below.

Electronic mail services just send strings of characters to and fro, whereas Prestel is a 'Viewdata' system, meaning it sends pictures and graphics too. Software needs to do more to receive Viewdata graphics, so if you want to use Prestel make sure your software is up to it.

8256UKM7.COM

Public domain (ie. free!)

P.D. software documentation is often poor but this program has an above average document file. UKM7 was written to support ASCII file transfers using error correction and as a dumb terminal either for use over the phone or between two Amstrads. Between two PCW's file transfer is possible at a staggering 31,250 baud which is even faster than PIP! Easy to use for beginners and better than KERMIT, UKM7 provides a cheap and excellent way to communications after you've got fed up with the PCW's MAIL232. 8256UKM7 is available from the Public Domain Special Interest Group, or most bulletin boards supporting the PCW machines.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Cheap! (the price of a phone call)
▲ Easy to use, and helpful menus
▼ Modem7 version of Xmodem error checking supported
▼ Single file and Batch Mode transfers
▼ "Quiet" mode for slightly faster transfers (on-line transfer progress report disabled)
▼ Only ASCII, no Viewdata
▼ You need to find a PD software source (eg. use a modem and MAIL232 software)

Mini Office Professional Plus

£39.95 • Database Software • 0625 878888

Thecomms package is as comprehensive as anything else on the market. It can display both ordinary text screens and the 'Viewdata' block graphics used by Prestel. You are offered baud rates from 75 to 9600, separately set for transmit and receive, straight terminal emulation for use with Telecom Gold, and XMODEM and KERMIT file transfer protocols for error-proof transfer of long files. Would be well worth the money just by itself – and of course you're getting four other very good programs as well.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Very comprehensive – a genuinely useful comms package
▲ Ordinary text and 'Viewdata' block graphics
▲ Can save setups under names and recall them, so you only need work out your baud rates/parities once
▲ You can set keys to return strings, such as Telecom Gold passwords
▲ Comes preconfigured to use Prestel and Telecom Gold

Chitchat E-Mail/ Viewdata/Combo

Sagesoft • £69.99/£69.99/£99.99 • 091 284 7077

Two communications programs for the 8000 series machines that have been around for a good time now. Most of the features you will need are here; message text editor, preprogramming unattended tasks(if you use a suitable "intelligent" modem), directory of stored numbers, copy to printer, and a very useful connect time clock so you can watch your phone bill climb! E-mail is used for simple text phone links like Telecom Gold, whereas you'll need Viewdata if you want to use Prestel. The Combo pack contains both E-mail and Viewdata.

PLUSES • MINUSES

▲ Good, clear documentation
▲ Easy for first timers to use
▲ Built in text editor for pre-sending message preparation
▲ Pre-definable tasks executable at any preset time if unattended.
▼ No error corrected file transfer (i.e. Xmodem or CRC)

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STOCKMARKET does not have to be used only with your real investments. We all see shares recommended in a newspaper or magazine that we think will do well. Six months later if the price has gone up we wish that we had trusted our judgement. If the price has fallen we quietly forget it. With STOCKMARKET you can record details of as many shares folios as you want. These can include hypothetical folios of 'hot stocks', recovery shares, penny shares or whatever you choose. You can practise buying and selling shares and see how well you do!

The program is easy to use and comes complete with a comprehensive manual and demonstration files including real price information going back several years for several shares (inc FT 30 index, British Telecom, Amstrad, Marks & Spencers) so that you can plot graphs straight away.

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Access VISA

Dialup

£89.99 • PMS Communications • 021-643 7688

Offers both E-mail and Viewdata operations. Very easy to use, and offers an XMODEM transfer protocol unlike Sage ChitChat. If you are buying a modem too there are some cut-price bundled deals to be had, eg. the Miracle Technology WS4000 modem.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Simple to use
- ▲ Comprehensive file transfer commands, including XMODEM and the increasingly popular KERMIT
- ▲ Runs from the M drive
- ▼ Manual is not PCW specific, and the references to 5.25" discs are tedious

COMM+

£86.25 • NewStar • 0245 265017

This single package combines both ASCII and full Viewdata block graphics and Telesoftware downloading. A very powerful command language allows you to look for particular messages coming in and take actions, even while doing other things. Its use is only limited by your programming ability.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Very comprehensive and well indexed ringbound manual
- ▲ High quality Viewdata graphics
- ▲ Well presented on-line help menus for use by beginners
- ▲ Autodialler program works with most modems
- ▲ Telesoftware downloading facility, with CRC/Xmodem checking
- ▲ Very powerful command language, doesn't need much programming skill to learn
- ▼ Not recommended for absolute beginners to communications

Programming

Programming languages come as either 'compilers' or 'interpreters' – compilers pre process the program into machine code, so are much faster. The PCW's standard Mallard BASIC and LOGO are both interpreters. Compilers are generally more cumbersome to use than interpreters, but have various benefits for serious programmers.

With language compilers in particular it is difficult to discover whether they are reliable and efficient without spending many weeks working with them, impossible for a brief review. If you use a specialised programming language and have any comments that would help us compile a good software file entry for it, we would be pleased to hear from you.

Basic Needs

£9.95 (£5 to RNLI) • Luxylan Software • 0726 850820

A BASIC bundle for programming buffs, which requires a small amount of foreknowledge to operate. Consists of five files that can be run under Mallard BASIC, including FRED, the FriendlyText Editor, which is an extremely agile and versatile file editor and program editor. Basic Needs is excellent value for money.

PLUSES * MINUSES

- ▲ Uses of LocoScript keys
- ▲ Easy to use
- ▲ Loads of features
- ▼ Documentation poor

HiSoft C

£39.95 • HiSoft • 0525 718181

A very good C compiler, fast, produces good compact code. It comes complete with the HiSoft integrated text editor ED80.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Compiles program into ordinary CPM .COM file
- ▲ Produces compact code
- ▲ Fast and inexpensive
- ▲ Comes with integrated text editor
- ▼ No floating point arithmetic

Arnor C

£49.95 • Arnor • 0733 68909

Good compiler with floating point arithmetic, but not as fast or as cheap as HiSoft C.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Excellent integrated text editor
- ▲ Floating point arithmetic
- ▼ Cumbersome to produce .COM files, needs special run time support program
- ▼ HiSoft C is faster and cheaper

MIX C

£29.95 • Advantage • 0242 224340

American C compiler. You can buy a full screen editor with it for £19.95 extra. Also machine code assembler & examples for £8.95 each.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Features an excellent C tutorial
- ▲ Comprehensive implementation and massive manual
- ▼ Not for the newcomer to programming

Pascal 80

£39.95 • Hisoft • 0525 718181

A standard full Pascal compiler that produces compact code. Comes with the ED80 text editor and a stand alone programmers editor.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Well integrated text editor – when you hit a compilation error you are returned to the correct point to edit it
- ▲ Short compilation time, economical on memory
- ▼ Manual makes no attempt to teach you Pascal

Hisoft Forth

£19.95 • Hisoft • 0525 718181

Forth is an unusual language, somewhere between assembler and C. This is one of the few compilers available for the PCW.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Comes with a Forth editor
- ▲ Quick and efficient implementation
- ▼ Manual doesn't teach you Forth

The Vicar

£49 • Iansyst • 071-607 5844

A programming tool for serious programmers. If you have a several-hundred line program held in several files on a disc, you can lose track of which variables are used where. The ViCAR produces a concordance listing and other diagnostics, to help you find bugs and maintain the program.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Easy to use but still flexible through use of options
- ▲ Amstrad versions all at a special low price
- ▲ Good manual
- ▼ Only of value on large programs
- ▼ Limited value to most PCW users (except BASIC buffs)

Modula 2

£45.00 • Hisoft • 0525 718181

A compiler. Modula-2 is the successor to Pascal, good for large programs requiring separate compilation, complete with text editor.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Full implementation with extensions.
- ▲ Includes libraries of predefined modules
- ▲ WordStar type screen editor included
- ▼ Compilation process is longwinded and not for beginners

CBASIC

£45.00 • Digital Research • 0635 35304

The original Basic compiler from Digital Research, and still one of the best for anyone wanting to produce COM files without abandoning their investment in Basic.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ Easier programming tool than conventional interpreter
- ▲ Very similar to Mallard Basic, so easy to learn
- ▼ No text editor – you need to buy a programmer's editor such as ED80, or the public domain VDO25
- ▼ Programs don't necessarily work faster than they would in conventional Basic, sometimes slower

All You Ever ...

£24.95 • CP Software • 0993 823463

Program is ridiculously entitled All You Ever Wanted To Know About Graphics, the Universe and Everything on the PCW 8256/8512 but were Afraid to Ask. It's for the experienced programmer who needs fast, smoothly flowing and professional looking graphics output. It has a library of machine code routines which you can use in any language from Mallard Basic to machine code.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ You can produce professional standard graphics
- ▲ Demo programs included on the disc
- ▲ Routines are very wide ranging
- ▲ Excellent value for money
- ▲ New routines of latest version concerned with printer control
- ▼ Not recommended for beginners
- ▼ Cumbersome to use from Basic

Pascal/MT

£45 Digital Research 0635 53499

A full implementation of ISO standard DPS/7185 Pascal with a number of extremely powerful additions. Is very good for large complex applications both data processing and system control.

PLUSES • MINUSES

- ▲ A very powerful tool for the serious software writer
- ▲ Unlimited program size with modular development and use of overlays
- ▲ Built in assembler
- ▲ Improved string handling (over standard Pascal)
- ▲ Choice of BCD real numbers for commercial/financial use
- ▼ No built in text editor
- ▼ Compiler in general and the manual in particular are not for beginners
- ▼ No graphics

DevPac 80 MKII

£49.95 Hisoft 0525 718181

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NEXT MONTH

The guide continues with the categories of SPREADSHEETS, GRAPHICS and GAMES. The month after that will cover WORD PROCESSORS, ACCOUNTS/ PAYROLL, UTILITY and DTP software, and the month after that it's back to this months topics.

Our intention is to keep publishing the three parts of the guide in rotation, updating it each month to include all new products. If you would like to see other sections of the guide, back issues of 8000 Plus are available at £1.75 each.

Meanwhile, if you are aware of any significant omissions or errors in the File as published, please let us know. We intend to maintain it as THE authoritative guide to PCW software.

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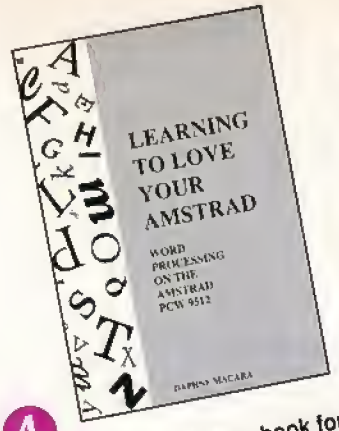

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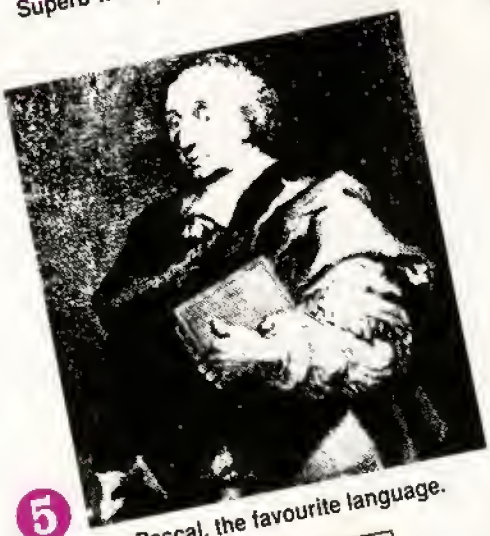

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POSTSCRIPT

Welcome to the listening pages in which you have your say. Your letters continue to arrive at the office in their lorry-loads with topics ranging as widely as ever. This month we're discussing cordless 'phones, castrated rams and chain letters, to name but a few. Please feel free to contribute to these pages at any time. As you can see, we're prepared to talk about almost anything; if it's PCW-related, all the better! So if you've got any opinions or are simply in need of a spot of advice, drop us a line and we'll try and help. The address is **8000 Plus, Postscript, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2XF.**

Making the grade

Your upgrade feature in the 8000 Plus April issue was excellent and it enabled me to memory upgrade my Amstrad 8256.

I purchased the memory upgrade from Silicon City, and did attempt to do the upgrade following their instructions because they appeared to dismantle less of the 8256 than your instructions.

However things were not going too well and my practice chip was getting quite legless by now. It was then that I turned to your instructions, which I found easy to follow (even if I had to dismantle more parts of the 8256) and I never looked back. When at the end I saw on the disc management screen the enclosed printout, I thought who's worried about the Poll Tax when you can get results like this? I am retired (aged 67 years) and the 8256 is a means of amusing myself in my old age.

Perhaps I will now look at the drive upgrade; in the meantime, thanks for your help.

R Macisaac Norwich

8000 Plus: *Thanks for your letter, Mr Macisaac.*

A fool's fool

Well, don't be too down-hearted. Here is one prize April Fool who appreciated the joke and got some fun out of it. It does us good to be stood on our heads occasionally and be made to see the world through a mirror as it really is! However, there was one consolation for me – I committed my folly on the 10th of April, which in my school-boy days would have made you the April Fool!

But why deprive all your less adventurous readers of the startling outcome of your little trick? Can we have a readable (ha! ha!) screenshot of the resultant disc management screen which has received the treatment?

One last thing. Surely your quality journal has earned the merit of being recognised as a 'magazine', rather than being relegated to something called a 'mag'.

Jim Cooke
Stourbridge

8000 Plus: *We'll give you two weeks to stop saying things like that; in the meantime, somebody take this man out for a drink!*

Manual dexterity (part 1)

Derek Chatterton ('Raw Deal' Postscript, May) has got it the wrong way round. Virtually every version of dBASE II sold in the UK has come with a different manual – none of them as good as Wayne Ratliff's 'original'. When Mario de Pace wrote 'Working with dBASE II' six years ago, he helped many people to get over the limitations of the existing dBASE II manuals.

At long last, someone has recognised the superiority of his book and based a dBASE II manual on it. I am sure Mr de Pace will be amused by the back-handed compliment implied by Derek Chatterton's letter, but perhaps a word of apology for the unintentional libel might be in order!

John Hudson
Huddersfield

8000 Plus: *Indeed, Mr Hudson. Mr Chatterton's annoyance is still understandable; effectively, he's forked out nearly ten pounds on a book that he already has in the form of the dBASE II manual. Instead of merely supplying a photocopied version of the book with the software, an arrangement like the Database (Mini Office) and John Hughes (All in One Personal Computing) package might have proved less misleading.*

Manual dexterity (part 2)

Your correspondent Derek Chatterton feels he's been ripped off by Mario de Pace on finding that de Pace's book 'Working with dBASE II' is a copy of the dBASE II manual he received with the package (Postscript May 90). In fact, it's the other way round. I bought dBASE II in 1988 and it was then marketed by First Software. There was a combined Tutorial and Reference Manual supplied with it of which I found the Reference part the most useful, the Tutorial being largely US biased, with alumni, zip codes, etc. I purchased de Pace's book and found it very helpful in getting to grips with the software and in having a more familiar British flavour to its examples.

I seem to recall reading some months ago that another company was now marketing dBASE II for CP/M micros, and it would appear that they have ditched the Tutorial and Reference Manual and bundled it with de Pace's book instead, overall probably a good move. Since 'Working with dBASE II' was published in 1984, it is not surprising that it makes no mention of it doubling as the manual too.

I can understand Derek Chatterton's annoyance at shelling out £9.95 for something he already has, but I shouldn't think it pleases Mario de Pace either to know that he is suspected of perpetrating a con.

If Derek Chatterton is interested, I have a spare copy of a book on more advanced dBASE II methods which he can have for a fiver plus postage.

Jim Ormerod
Rossendale

8000 Plus: *Thanks for your letters of enlightenment, both. Unfortunately, I can't publish your 'phone number, Mr Ormerod, but if the interested party can contact us, we'll be only too pleased to pass it on.*

Official word

The debate about the relative merits of the various word processors available to PCW owners is a fascinating one.

It seems to me that a word processing program for an 8 bit computer cannot possibly be as powerful as one for a PC. Either the program will be too slow or there will be fewer features than a PC word-processing program.

This therefore is the choice facing designers of PCW word processing programs.

It is a well-known fact that many, if not most, users of word processors, never use a lot of the features that are available to them in the programs they use. On the other hand, most people would agree that speed in scrolling, block movements, find and exchange etc, are of the utmost importance. Slowness greatly diminishes the pleasure and usefulness of word processing.

This is why I believe that LocoScript 2, despite (or perhaps because of) its huge list of features, does not make the most of the PCW computer. Locomotive, in trying to supply every feature together with total user-friendliness, have sadly lost sight of the absolute necessity of speed. Protext, being much faster is a better bet, but being less user-friendly might not be suitable for newcomers to word processing.

The word processing module of Mini Office Professional is not really a highly rated program, but despite being a smaller package than the aforementioned two, has all the features that the majority would need (not to mention one or two not found in the other two packages). Its speed, however, is exceptionally good and this makes it the most appropriate package to use in the PCW.

Thank you for your help in this matter.

I Chisnall
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8000 Plus: *I agree, Mini Office's word processor is certainly a good one and it's word count facility only consolidates the advantage it has over some of its rivals. It's easily the most resilient module in the suite of five which make up the Mini Office whole. Unfortunately, the less successful reputations of the others means that it is often not taken as seriously as it should be. Its irritating habit of crashing unexpectedly at the most inopportune moments doesn't do it any favours either.*

Mission impossible

I own an Amstrad PCW 8256, fitted with extra memory, an external 5.25 inch disc drive and an RS232 interface.

Can you tell me if there is any method of connecting the Amstrad to my professional video equipement. The idea is that I would like to create simple captions on the PCW and then transfer them across and record on video tape.

David Bytheway
Stirlingshire

"IT'S NOT EXACTLY WHAT I WANTED..."

8000 Plus: *Theoretically, at least, any computer should be able to perform such a task. As far as we are aware, however, the hardware required to make your PCW do it doesn't, as yet, exist.*

Yesterday's news

Question: Issue no. 43 of 8000 Plus, dated April 1990, carries a New Star Software advertisement on the back page with a Celebratory Offer which "applies until September 30th 1989". Discuss.

Alun Rees
Haverfordwest, Dyfed

8000 Plus: *Crikey: you'd better get a move on.*

Locoscript - PC to PCW

I write this with something of a feeling of euphoria, since after four years of owning a PCW 8256 I have at long last summoned up the courage to try to expand it. With the admirable assistance of the article at page 45 of the April issue of your equally admirable magazine, I have today fitted a 256K memory expansion kit, and it worked. This letter, which is being typed in LocoScript 2, will be the first document on the expanded machine to be spell checked using the full facilities of the LocoSpell Large Dictionary, and I can hardly wait to get my hands on some of the other goodies now available to the extra scope of memory.

As one with no previous computer experience, who bought the PCW purely as a word processor, I now find myself with the help of your magazine, reaching heights of computer literacy previously undreamed of. The law office, which commands my attention from nine to five on week days has recently standardised on Word Perfect on a network of PCs, and I find myself the only professional member of staff equipped with my own machine. With the aid of Touch 'n' Go, I also find that I am nearly as good a typist as most of the typing pool. Not bad at fifty five!

I find that I do miss the old reliable (and familiar) LocoScript, though, and wonder whether, if I add LocoScript PC to my office machine, and a three and a half inch disc to my PCW, I will be able to interchange files between the two. Any comments?Keep up the good work.

James Leckie
Langport, Somerset

8000 Plus: *Because there isn't, as far as we know at the moment, any way of mixing PC and PCW 3.5 inch formats, the best way of transferring your data is to attach a 5.25 inch drive to the PCW and use a PC with a native 5.25 inch drive in the office.*

Alternatively, the most mobile solution to the problem is to buy an AgendA: you will be able to transfer PC files onto the electronic organiser and send them, in turn, to the PCW (providing you use Ascii files at both ends). An added advantage of doing it this way is that you don't lose the use of your PCW's B: drive (attaching a 5.25 inch drive to the machine would automatically disable it.) It won't prove that much more expensive than buying a 5.25 inch drive either.

BACK UP - feed back

You and your staff will be pleased to learn that when the accounts for this company were audited last month after the first formal year of trading (actually only 10½ months) we managed a turnover of £12,136, which after consumables, postage, administration costs and purchase of initial equipment resulted in £9,119 being paid into the Charities Aid Foundation account. My target for a full year was originally £10,000 profit for the charities and this certainly will be exceeded.

Some of this has already been sent to BACUP and other charities such as the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association and as soon as the tax paid by the Company has been recouped into that Covenant account, we will be making further payments to the charities. You may like to pass this onto the readers of 8000 Plus.

Dave Smith
Dave's Disk Doctor Service Ltd

8000 Plus: *Thanks for your letter, Dave. Other readers might like to know that Dave's Disk Doctor Service offers prompt salvation to those of you who lose important data due to corrupted discs. Send the offending disc, along with a self-addressed padded envelope to Dave Smith, 41 Tutsham Way, Paddock Wood, Kent TN12 6UA (telephone 0892 835974). All proceeds go to the cancer research association, BACUP, or to the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association.*

Driving tests

I have an upgraded PCW 8256, with memory upgrade to 8512 and have just fitted a 3.5 inch second drive, purchased after your review of the one supplied by Compact Micros. The drive was easy to fit and works fine, but I have a small problem. How do you copy a disc in drive A? I use mostly LocoScript programs. The disc copy facility tells me to insert source disc in drive B which of course I cannot do as it only takes 3.5 inch discs.

Following a reader's comment in your November issue, I can fool the PCW into thinking the second drive does not exist by inserting a disc into drive B during start-up of LocoScript, and then copy the disc in drive A. However, I cannot then use drive B without rebooting. Is there any way I can alter the LocoScript program so that drive A can be used to copy in the normal way for an 8256, while still retaining the facilities of the second drive?

John Bence
Leicester

8000 Plus: *The first thing to note here is that CP/M's DISCKIT facility treats the second 3.5 inch drive as a normal B: drive. Consequently, you should be able to copy your A: drive disc straight to the 3.5 inch disc in the second drive in exactly the same way as you would to a second internal drive.*

Alternatively, copy the files on the A: drive disc onto drive M: using PIP, and then PIP them onto drive B. It couldn't be simpler.

It's a cracker!

I would like to compliment you on the quality of your magazine. I am finding your tutorial on Masterfile 8000 very useful. I wonder whether you are planning a similar series on the Cracker 2 Turbo. I have found the manual supplied deficient in many parts. I have failed to find any publication that deals with this program. I would appreciate any assistance or advice you can offer.

Ashley Hood
Mid Glamorgan

8000 Plus: *If anyone else is interested in a Cracker tutorial series, please write in and let us know; we will be only too pleased to consider running one if the response is great enough.*

Science report

Thank you for continuing to produce a helpful, informative magazine for PCW users.

I am a secondary school science teacher and am interested in hearing of any applications to which the PCW has been put in school laboratory experiments or demonstrations.

I would also like to obtain a copy of a crossword making program that will run on the PCW.

Can anyone help me?

Russel Nimmo
Hertfordshire

8000 Plus: *We don't know of any fully fledged commercial software other than those science-based educational programs of the type reviewed occasionally in the magazine. Have a read of our round-up of PCW educational software in the February 89 issue (issue 29, page 10). In last April's issue, however, we published a letter (Calling all teachers) in which a PCW-owning English teacher, John Ravenscroft from Lincolnshire, was hoping to get in touch with a like-minded bunch of teaching professionals, interested in finding new ways of increasing classroom productivity using the PCW. He may well be able to put you in touch with someone who can help. I'm afraid I can't publish his 'phone number, but will pass it on to you if you write in.*

We don't know of a commercial crossword program for the PCW either; can anyone else out there help?

Circular problem

I am writing this letter for two reasons.

Firstly, your April article on upgrading the 8256's memory was excellent and inspired me to order the chips from Silicon City (whose service was first class by the way) and have a bash at fitting them myself. I succeeded within 45 minutes and am now the proud owner of a PCW 8512 with single disc drive! Who knows I may try fitting a second disc drive in the near future (pennies permitting!!)

The second reason for writing is, alas, not so pleasing.

On April 12th, I received the enclosed chain letter which for some reason started ringing distant bells in my head. The typeface looked familiar for a start – and so did the wording.

After delving into old copies of 8000 Plus, I came across an article on page 5 of the February 1989 issue abut a similar letter which had been doing the rounds and had been sent in by a reader.

Your advice then was to 'take it to the local paper recycler's' which I would have done, but I felt that since 14 months had elapsed since that issue, you might like to consider repeating your advice once again.

It would appear that the sender of the letter that I received also got my name and address from your classified ads since I advertised a program I had written in the ads last year.

I know I can trust you to take 'good care' of the letter – maybe you could send it on to Esther Rantzen for investigation then we can add 'That's Life' to the PCW's television appearances!

Ian Muffet Rotherham
South Yorkshire

8000 Plus: *Nice thought, Mr M. I'm afraid all I can do is reiterate the advice of my predecessor; I can assure you that your's is now nestling comfortably at the bottom of the office waste paper basket. Should anyone else receive a chain letter and feel remotely uncomfortable about destroying it, send it in to us; we'll do it for you.*

Sticky key syndrome

I was reading the May edition of 8000 Plus and I came across the sub-heading 'Sticking Keys' when I read about Mrs Williamson. I just had to write. The article said her keys on her four year old machine were starting to stick. I had the same problem, so I went out and got some electrical lubricant. I only know of two sorts: these are WD40 and Ambersil Amberlube 436A but the later is hard to get hold of. I got mine by accident; the engineer who came to sort it out left it behind. It works a treat, just spray it down the side of each key and then give it time to penetrate each one (about 15 to 20 minutes – maybe longer depending on the seriousness of the problem). I hope Mrs Williamson gets satisfaction with this method.

John Sunderland
Nelson, Lancashire

8000 Plus: *Thanks for taking the time to write in, John.*

Pigs and pins

I was interested to read, in the May edition, your news item on OASIS, (Organisation Against Sexism in Software), a noble cause with which I wholeheartedly agree. I was therefore, shocked to read the rather blatant innuendo to male 'pins' contained in Tim Smith's article on 5.25 inch disc drives on page 11. I sincerely hope that the June issue of 8000 Plus will avoid such embarassing references to my 9512.

Apart from this though, to date, 8000 Plus has been very helpful and one of the few monthly expenses which becomes a vital reference work, so I can't agree with Mr Henley's opinions.

Keep up the good work.

Philip Taylor
Cheshire

8000 Plus: *Indeed yes, the purpose which drives Sandra Vogel and Oasis is laudable and I have nothing to offer but support. As for the comment about male pins, this was actually a dig at the electronics genius who came up with terms male and female connectors. Even if this was not the case, I feel that assuming any sexist content to a sentence which said "males, it seems, always have their pins sticking out" is pushing a point. The emphasis was on the "it seems" part of the sentence rather than the pins. It's not as if I said "All males think with their pins."TS*

Hung up on the line

Great magazine, been reading it since it came out; truly wondrous, benchmark of its kind ... (enough of this grovelling). Do you think you or a reader could help solve a slightly irritating problem?

As well as an 8000 PCW owner, I own a Dixon's cordless phone which up until about six months ago co-existed quite happily. I was able to sit on my swinging chair, call up LocoFile, look up a number and ring them up and then wander around yuppie-like while making a call. However, now the computer interferes with the 'phone. It just will not work – no dialling tone when calling out and no reply when answering. All I get on both occasions is what I can only describe as white noise. The phone recently went in for an unrelated repair but no improvement.

Has anybody out there got any ideas on how to resume my yuppie impersonation? And please don't advise me to get a Golf GTI and drink Aqua Libra.

Thanks a lot and all the best.

Antony McAvoy
Sanderstead Surrey

8000 Plus: *Seeing as your PCW and cordless 'phone existed in a state of perfect yuppie equilibrium for six months, it seems unlikely that the PCW is to blame for your current state of incommunicado. A far more likely culprit is something else in the immediate surroundings (still quite unlikely) or the 'phone itself (very likely). A fellow Plusser here in the office informs me cordless 'phones "go through the batteries like nobody's business." Are you sure there's nothing equally simple afoot?*

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COMPETITION

Find five AgendA-related words in the word square – and the £195 micro-writer can be yours – for free!

This month's bumper prizes: three AgendAs (each worth £195) and complete with dedicated cabling for PCW file transfers are waiting to be won

There's nothing more frustrating than being stuck on a long train journey in the certain knowledge that you could be accomplishing a whole lot more if only you had your PCW plugged in in front of you raring to go. Just think how much more effectively you could be using your time if you had your very own portable computer – roughly the size and weight of a stuffed wallet – into which you could type your letters, appointments or even, articles, for later editing or printing out on your PCW.

The AgendA electronic organiser (worth £195 and reviewed in our February issue) is one machine that can translate this vision of computing on the move into hard reality. And it can be yours for nothing. All you have to do is cast your eyes over the word square below and pick out the six AgendA-related words or terms.

The best news is yet to come, however, for Micro Writer Systems, instead of supplying us with just one AgendA, have kindly donated three, each one coming packaged with its own dedicated cabling for AgendA / PCW data transfers.

So, all you roving reporters get spotting; answers on the back of a post-card please, to 8000 Plus, AgendA Competition, Beauford Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2XF, no later than 31st June.

X	T	A	Y	S	P	Q	M	A	W
E	C	L	E	Z	X	V	I	H	L
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H	A	P	O	C	K	E	T	J	E
O	R	G	A	N	I	S	E	R	N

April winners

Our congratulations go to Robin Burrows-Ellis from Ipswich, Jas Pilkington from Chorley in Lancashire and Mrs Valerie Bain from RAF Gaton who correctly completed our April word circle to form KEYBOARD. Copies of HTB's PCWDraw will soon be in the post to them.

Next month

At last – the bare fax

No more false starts; this time it's for real. Next month, we will be giving Amstrad's new fax machine the 8000 Plus once-over and working out just what it means for the outward-bound, all-communicating PCW owner. Keep it here for the latest news.

Double your drive

Are you interested in adding a second 3 inch drive to your PCW 9512? Now's your chance to cut out all that irritating disc swapping and get straight to the heart of your new 1,412K machine. Follow our step by step fully-illustrated guide; you can't go wrong.

Let your fingers do the walking

Or rather – your keyboard. It looks like the good old yellow pages have finally decided to move with the times as they vamp up their image and go on-line. So, if you want to learn how you can get your PCW to find out who does what, when – and for how much – nationwide, read Andrew Bibby's latest report direct from British Telecom.

Name of the prose

8000 Plus journeys into deepest Cornwall to talk to Gill Kingsland, head of the completely PCW-powered company Nom de Plume, which produces creative writing courses for budding authors. Not only does this company write all its course material on the PCW, its nest of 8000s also takes care of this regular advertiser's daily, humdrum admin. Want to learn more? Well don't miss next month's star interview.

Final Masterclass

Next month we will be rounding off our enormously popular Masterfile 8000 tutorial series with two pages of hints, tips and things you always wanted to know about one of the PCW's favourite databases but were afraid to ask. All Masterfile devotees shouldn't forget, therefore, to tune into Dr Ainsley's surgery next month.

The July issue of

8000 PLUS

will be at your local newsagents from 28th June. Book your copy now

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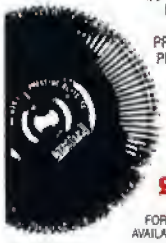

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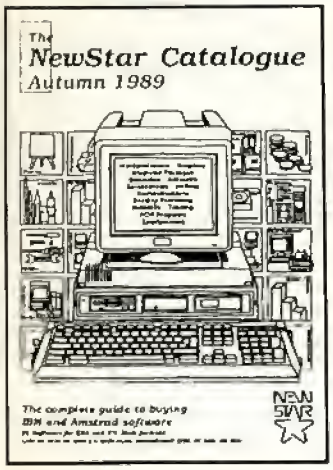

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There are 64 pages describing a complete range of IBM PC (and compatible) software, plus an expanded section covering the best of the PCW software.

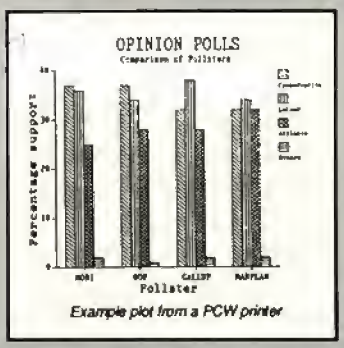
Accounts, wordprocessing, database and graphics are all covered.

Check and see if your local software stockist has the *New Star* catalogue available - and if not, ask them to get some in, but don't delay before getting your free copy! ❑

Cracker 2 *Turbo*

still the only high res graphic spreadsheet for PCW users

The range of features and functions in Cracker remains



Example plot from a PCW printer

unsurpassed for the serious spreadsheet user. And don't forget, like newWord, Cracker users can upgrade to MSDOS and CDOS systems, taking all data and experience as you go!

❑ *Cracker2 £42.61*

NewWord2:

the classic alternative WP for the PCW

Lost in LocoScript? You may be surprised to learn that the most refined *WordStar* workalike of them all has been available to run on the PCW since long before LocoScript was dreamed of!

NewWord2 operates under the CPM operating system, and uses the universally recognised codes that allow transportability of the skill to virtually any micro computer - including systems operating under CDOS and Unix! What's more, the files are directly transferrable!

- ❑ *NewWord2 PCW £60*
- ❑ *NewWord2 with Polyprint typeface sets, if purchased together £99.95*
- ❑ *Upgrade NewWord2 PCW to IBM PC edition £39.95*
- ❑ *Upgrade NewWord2 PCW to IBM PC edition with STAM file transfer utility suite £60*

(Return of original master disk required with all upgrade purchases)

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